

Social Entrepreneurs In Rio De Janeiro: Learning Experiences and Social Capital

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS IN RIO DE JANEIRO: LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND SOCIAL CAPITAL**

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The purpose of this study is to gain insight into how social entrepreneurs dedicated to violence prevention in Rio de Janeiro learn to take on the role of a social entrepreneur. Based on a two-tiered interview process with 27 social entrepreneurs in Rio de Janeiro conducted over a period of nine months, the study explores the breadth of experiences they rely upon to learn the necessary skills and knowledge to be a social entrepreneur. Built on the notion that social relations have the potential to provide social entrepreneurs with valuable information and resources, this dissertation also examines the social capital that is embedded in their social networks and the role it plays in the social entrepreneurial process.

Findings show that leaders relied on a convergence of experiences and social capital in order to learn different skills, and knowledge relevant to social entrepreneurship. In particular, direct experience with inequality, interaction over an extended period of time with those most negatively affected by social problems, volunteer work, experiences with religious institutions, social activism, formal education, professional experience, reading and intercultural interactions proved to be crucial experiences in the learning trajectories of these leaders. Findings also revealed that

opportunities for social capital associated with the leaders' initiatives' target population and a network of actors, or what I refer to as a community of innovation, were crucial in the leaders' social entrepreneurial trajectories.

This study adds to our understanding of how social entrepreneurs learn to take on their leadership roles. Counter to prior literature that focused on personality traits of the social entrepreneur, my dissertation presents a more nuanced understanding of how the interplay among experiences, learning processes and social capital informed these leaders in taking on their social entrepreneurial role. The study is relevant to scholars and practitioners committed to fostering social entrepreneurship, particularly those dedicated to violence prevention and youth empowerment in urban areas. It offers educators, practitioners and policy-makers insights into how social entrepreneurs are learning and realizing their roles, including ways that are not currently part of formal programs in social entrepreneurship.

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to the inspiring social entrepreneurs in my study and the hundreds of thousands of individuals that their initiatives aim to empower.

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of the Problem

*Social entrepreneurship is a process that catalyzes “social transformation well beyond the solutions of the social problems that are the initial focus of concern.”*

(Alvord, Brown & Letts, 2004, p. 4)

Social entrepreneurship is understood as a process that, through innovative initiatives, transforms society by addressing the immediate targeted problem and also instigating long-term changes in the system within which it is embedded. A social entrepreneur is, thus, a person or a group of people who creates innovative solutions to social problems in ways that go beyond the immediate focus of concern to catalyze positive long-term social transformation (Alvord, Brown & Letts, 2004). Social entrepreneurs tend to address social issues that have the biggest impact on poor marginalized populations (Jacobi, 2006; Alvord, Brown & Letts, 2004; Bornstein, 1998). While social entrepreneurs can work within the public or business sectors, most work within the “third sector”—a range of civic efforts and organizations that are separate from government and for-profit organizations (Mair & Marti, 2006; Gunn, 2004).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Non-profit organizations as defined in this study are private self-governing formal organizations that do not redistribute funds and provide a distinct social service that people generally would not receive within the public or private sector (Weisbrod, 1998; Salamon & Anheir, 1997; Frumkin, 2005).

In recent years, social entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurs have gained public attention. In the media, the use of the term, “social entrepreneur” has almost tripled since 2004 (Bornstein, 2007). As a field of study, social entrepreneurship has grown significantly and courses on social entrepreneurship are becoming increasingly popular at prestigious universities around the world (Bornstein, 2007; CNN, 2009; Mair & Marti, 2006).

While the impact of social entrepreneurship on societal issues has been recognized, little is known about the social entrepreneurs who initiate these efforts. More specifically, it is unclear how these entrepreneurs learn. Learning is a process that can be conceptualized on numerous levels (Sfard, 1998). Most traditionally it is understood as a cognitive process of accessing, acquiring, and processing skills and knowledge. Learning can also be conceptualized as a more socially-situated phenomenon of gathering, processing, and incorporating information and experiences in a contextualized social process, rather than just an isolated act within the minds of individuals (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Conversely, learning may entail not only mastery of already established knowledge and information, but also as a collaborative “activity producing phenomena” that takes places in a socio-historical context (Engeström, 1999). Learning in this sense focuses on collaboratively developing new ideas, objects, or concepts. Of interest in this study are the ways in which social entrepreneurs in Rio de Janeiro obtain information, behaviors, skills, values and understandings, as well as collaborative processes that lead to the generation of new ideas. Learning on all levels is understood within the context of their social worlds.

It is well established that individuals learn through experiences (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1983; Brookfield, 1986; Mezirow, 1990; Fenwick 2003). Experience in this study is broadly defined as the process of personally observing, encountering, undergoing or living through something (Merriam-Webster, 2012). A learning experience is understood as an experience that changes the meaning-making schemata of the learner in some way (Mezirow, 1999), and the learner is able to connect previous, present and future experiences (Dewey, 1938). In taking on their roles, social entrepreneurs refer to and rely on prior experiences from which they learned relevant knowledge, skills and values, and these prior experiences inform future ones (Bornstein, 2007). Prior research has not clarified what specific experiences social entrepreneurs rely on, nor is it understood how they combine these experiences to inform their work. As this dissertation shows, certain experiences are conducive to learning skills and knowledge specifically relevant to social entrepreneurship. This dissertation also explains the process of *how* the social entrepreneurs in my study relied on the accumulation of prior experiences to inform future social entrepreneurial endeavors.

Accessing “resources”—defined here broadly as those things that facilitate the transfer of information and skills and/or the creation of ideas—is essential to becoming a social entrepreneur. Resources embedded in social networks—the social structures composed of actors (people, organizations or communities) in patterned relationships—are considered “social capital” (Borgatti & Foster, 2003; Haythornthwaite, 1996). In other words, social capital is a resource whose availability and exchange of resources are embedded in the relationship with other actors (Bourdieu, 2007).

Learning their roles, social entrepreneurs gain some of the knowledge and skills they need through connections to individuals and networks that help them facilitate their goals. Social networks are crucial to the work of social entrepreneurs and to how social entrepreneurs learn (Jacobi, 2006; Arias, 2004). Arias (2004) states, “Network contacts promote learning and communication, which ultimately leads to more effective and sustainable change among popular social efforts.” My dissertation focuses on opportunities for social capital that the social entrepreneurs in my study relied on to conceptualize and implement innovative social initiatives.

### **Research Purpose**

This dissertation focuses on the experiences and social capital accessed and utilized by social entrepreneurs in Rio de Janeiro who initiate programs or non-profit organizations directed toward violence prevention and/or the empowerment of urban youth living in marginalized spaces in Rio de Janeiro. Central to this investigation are third sector organizations intended to catalyze structural transformation in society (Candler, 2000). Attention is given to with whom, where, and in what ways these innovators, who work in the third sector, access and utilize the skills and knowledge necessary to develop and administer social entrepreneurial programs.

Utilizing qualitative methods (described later), the study aims to answer the following research questions: How do social entrepreneurs in Rio de Janeiro learn to take on the role of a social entrepreneur?

1. What types of experiences do social entrepreneurs have access to and rely upon to learn the skills and knowledge necessary to take on the role of social entrepreneur? What is the interplay between the experiences social entrepreneurs rely on to learn and their capacity to take on this role?
2. What social capital do social entrepreneurs have access to and rely upon to learn the necessary skills and knowledge to take on the role of a social entrepreneur? What is the interplay between their social capital and their capacity to take on the role of a social entrepreneur?

### **Initial Interest**

My interest in studying social entrepreneurs began in the summer of 2008 while I was collecting pre-dissertation data in Rio de Janeiro. There, interviewing a handful of leaders of non-formal education programs intended to empower “at-risk” youth from the *favelas* and suburbs of Rio de Janeiro, I asked about the biggest problem faced by the youth with whom they worked. Almost all of the leaders described a structural, societal, or institutional problem, such as police and drug trade violence, Brazil’s unequal educational system, or unfair labor market. In contrast, the educational programs initiated by the leaders typically focused on addressing the immediate needs of individual children or adolescents, not on changing the structure or system they had asserted were the roots of the problem.

I was struck by the discord and I questioned what influenced the leaders’ perception of the problem and the “solution” to the problem. During this early research, I



also became aware of the role of social entrepreneurs in Rio de Janeiro who initiate programs or non-profit organizations directed toward some of the “roots.” I wondered if the way they learned about social problems and solutions played a role in their focus on structural *and* individual change, as opposed to just individual-centered change. I wanted to know more about these leaders and decided to specifically study social entrepreneurs who focus not only on empowering urban youth living in Rio’s *favelas* and other marginalized spaces, but who also focus on changing social processes that are at the core of problems such as violence. To offer a more tangible description of the types of leaders that I included in my study and a sense of their initiatives, I turn to the story of José,<sup>2</sup> one of the 27 social entrepreneurs in my study.

### **José: The Story of a Social Entrepreneur**

José grew up in a humble neighborhood in one of the largest *favela*<sup>3</sup> complexes in the northern zone of Rio de Janeiro. About 30 minutes by bus from the center of the City, many of the housing units in his community were makeshift shacks, and only some of the residents had access to luxuries such as piped water, electricity and gas. The neighborhood lacked adequate health facilities, sanitation services, and recreational space. When asked about his formative years, José explained how school, the Catholic Church and social activism played a critical role in his personal development. Due to limited leisure and cultural outlets in his underserved neighborhood, he was involved in his local church, which was an important source of community activities. At the age of

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<sup>2</sup> I have changed the names of the social entrepreneurs throughout my dissertation for purposes of confidentiality.

<sup>3</sup> *Favela* means slum or shantytown in Portuguese. It describes a cluster of makeshift shacks constructed of bricks, cement, garbage, and other discarded materials that initially were built in informal spaces in Rio de Janeiro.

11, he began doing volunteer work through his local Catholic youth group. His involvement with the Church was connected to Liberation Theology,<sup>4</sup> which later opened up opportunities for José to engage in popular education in the peripheral areas of the city. José credits his social networks with the Church while growing up as most important in terms of his personal development and referred to as his “ethical base.”

Most of José’s friends attended a few years of school before dropping out so that they could work to help support their families. José was different: His father was in the military and encouraged him to graduate from secondary school so that he could follow in his professional footsteps (to pursue a military career, a certain level of education was required). José loved school and did very well academically. He devoured books and read whatever was available. José went beyond his father’s expectations and got a Ph.D. to fulfill his dream of being a professor (much to his father’s dismay). José was the only one in his family to study beyond high school. At the time, few *favela* residents had the opportunity to study at the university level because of a lack of financial resources and academic preparedness necessary to pass the competitive college entrance exam called the *vestibular*. Schools in peripheral areas, José explained, generally provided an inferior education to ones in more affluent neighborhoods. To help pass the *vestibular*, José got a full-time job during the day and used his earnings to pay for a course that prepared him for the rigorous college exam. Once accepted to college, José experienced a slew of financial, social, cultural, and interpersonal difficulties as he transitioned from life in a *favela* to the university environment. Prior to going to college, he had virtually no

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<sup>4</sup> Liberation theology is a social movement within the leftist wing of the Catholic Church, which flourished in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s. The movement is made up of groups called, “Ecclesiastical Base Communities” (CEBS), which revolve around interpreting the teachings of the Bible as a form of liberation from unjust economic and social conditions.

interaction with anyone with a higher education degree. He often felt alienated in this new environment and wasn't sure what others expected of him. This adjustment highlighted for him how socially isolated *favela* life was from the rest of the city and how students from similar backgrounds might face comparable challenges in their quest to obtain a university degree. Based on his personal experiences, José decided to write his dissertation on residents from the *favelas* who made it to college, to understand the factors that influenced their educational pathways.

As important as formal education was in José's life course, he explained, "My trajectory as a social activist is hugely important, even more important than, for example, the university." During his teenage years, José became active in student movements and led a youth activist group. He later joined the Workers Party, a political leftist party. His involvement in social activism played an important role in developing his sense of social responsibility. It also taught him about the value of working with other people to achieve common goals. Through his involvement in social movements, he met his future wife, who would later be his partner in setting up innovative social projects in the communities where they were raised. He continued his political party work after graduating from college and advanced to a senior position. While he probably could have progressed even farther, José left his career in politics to accept a position as professor at a local state university. During this time he and his wife co-created a non-profit organization in the *favela* (where his wife was from) that aimed to open up opportunities for *favela* residents to attend and succeed in higher education, while at the same time supporting community development efforts.

José was bothered for quite some time by the overwhelming misconceptions and

prejudice against *favelas* and their residents by outsiders. He noticed that *favelas* were generally perceived as nothing but spaces filled with social problems. He believed that a major cause of so many failed programs aimed at addressing poverty, crime, and violence in Brazil's *favelas* was because the folks who knew the *favelas* best, *favela* residents, typically were not involved in the creation of such programs. Further, *favela* residents usually were not represented in institutions such as universities that create, document and disseminate research intended to inform policy.

José wanted to initiate a new kind of research and training project that studied marginalized communities without preconceived notions and with the ultimate goal of influencing public policies. He invited three economist colleagues to join him. Each one was responsible for a particular project, and José was responsible for heading a training program that prepared *favela* residents, who had first-hand experience and knowledge of the *favelas*, to conduct research about their communities. José's project eventually grew to be so big that he split off from the original research group and created a non-profit umbrella organization. Since its first days as a non-profit organization, the aim has been to connect universities and research institutions more closely to *favelas*, and to engage *favela* residents more directly in the production, dissemination and application of research findings. The organization is based on the assumption that the best approach to overcoming problems in marginalized urban spaces is to start with an accurate understanding of the context, which should be informed by the experience and knowledge of their inhabitants. Similar to its initial days, the research efforts of the organization are led predominately by a network of (paid) students, who grew up and continue to live in the *favelas*. The purpose is two-fold: The organization aims to support

university students from low-income backgrounds by offering the opportunity to develop strong research skills, as well as the technical skills needed to translate research findings into practical solutions for the communities they come from. The program provides monetary and methodological support to participating students. For many of the students, the financial compensation is critical for covering living expenses while they attend university. Through rigorous research, the organization also aims to improve the social realities of traditionally underserved communities, and to encourage students to stay connected with their communities in the long run so that they can apply the knowledge that they learned through research (and their university studies in general) towards community empowerment efforts. The organization's model has been replicated in more than 40 universities throughout Brazil.

I asked José why he thinks his project has done so well. He explained,

In order to have an organization that is well run- you have to have four fundamental components. The first is the capacity to formulate a project – the conceptualization of the project - what is the mission and what is it that you want to accomplish? You have to have a clear idea so you have to have theoretical conceptualization. And you have to have social networks.... We [José and his wife] have had a very long social activist trajectory with a long path in which we met tons of people and even if we don't know them, they know of our story and so we have social credibility. We have started many social projects; we work on one thing and then jump to another. So our "talk" is very legitimate and so we have social networks, technical capacities, theoretical understanding and we are well known as social activists and these characteristics have resulted in a process in which we are recommended by certain people (because of our work) and then we meet other people and they recommend us and people know of us because of our work and then our work starts to become more well-known and through that more people know of us or meet us and then we start to have visibility... We learn a lot through our past personal experiences.... I am an intellectual from the periphery and this very much influences how I see things and very much the projects that I design. So this has a lot more influence than other variables. It is

my personal interpretation of the reality.... Throughout my trajectory... I have always worked with different people. My personal development was very individual but my process of action was always collective and with a group of people...

José states that four fundamental components of social entrepreneurship are: the capacity to formulate or conceptualize a project (theoretical conceptualization), technical capacities, social networks, and credibility. But how do social entrepreneurs access the knowledge necessary to conceptualize a project or the technical capacities to implement innovative ideas? How do they build up social networks and achieve credibility? José's quote highlights two important themes that add insight into these questions and will be examined in this dissertation: the importance of prior experiences and how they inform future ones, and the role of social relationships and social capital in the social entrepreneurial story.

### **Significance of the Study**

The practices associated with what we now refer to as “social entrepreneurship” have existed in practice for hundreds of years. Yet, social scientists are just beginning to develop a theoretical understanding of the term. Early research on social entrepreneurs focused on individual attributes, suggesting that entrepreneurs are “born” with innate qualities such as charisma and drive that are conducive to social innovation (Bornstein, 1998; Drayton, 2002). Such a perspective implies that social entrepreneurship cannot be learned. This study challenges the emphasis on individuals by examining social entrepreneurs from a sociological perspective. Specifically, this work will illustrate the breadth of experiences and social capital that the participants drew upon in learning their roles and how the social context in which the leaders were embedded shaped the

experiences and social capital that the leaders were able to access. Informed by the perspective of the social entrepreneurs, the findings offer insight into the types of experiences social entrepreneurs rely on to learn and how these experiences inform them in their social entrepreneurial work. For example, my study highlights experiences that influenced the leaders' desire to work toward positive social change. Understanding experiences that encourage a sense of social responsibility is important because one of the distinguishing characteristics of social entrepreneurship versus other forms of entrepreneurship is applying innovation toward social good. By understanding the types of experiences that encourage social responsibility, we can encourage future potential innovative leaders to engage in similar experiences. Further, my study examines *how* social entrepreneurs learn from prior experiences. The findings are important because they can inform aspiring social entrepreneurs about processes, such as reflection, that can enhance the learning opportunities of prior experiences in order to inform subsequent actions.

I decided to focus on social networks and social capital because social connections have the potential to provide leaders interested in instigating and orchestrating innovative and socially transforming initiatives with valuable support, information and resources. My study focuses on the social capital embedded in social relations that played an important role in the initial conceptualization and implementation of the leaders' innovative ideas. My findings can inform future social entrepreneurs about social relations they may wish to cultivate, in order to access valuable social resources during these stages of social entrepreneurship. Further, my study questions current trends and policies in the field of social entrepreneurship, which credit and support individual

leaders with developing innovative social ideas (Drayton, 2002; Bornstein, 2007).

Aligning with recent literature that conceptualizes social entrepreneurship as a social process, my findings indicate that a group of individuals contributed to the initial conceptualization and implementation of innovative social ideas. There are important practical and policy implications, such as fostering collaborative innovation geared toward transformative social change, versus the traditional individualist approach.

Finally, my study expands the conceptualization of learning by embracing a pluralistic perspective. Drawing from the strengths of various concepts of learning (Sfard, 1998), my study can help policymakers, practitioners and educators of entrepreneurial programs to better understand how social innovators learn on numerous planes, including ways that are not traditionally included in formal educational programs.

This study is important because “institutional agents,” in this case social entrepreneurs, can potentially help transform society in ways that directly benefit society’s most marginalized and vulnerable populations. Focusing on social entrepreneurs who have instigated an initiative dedicated to violence prevention or the empowerment of poor urban youth is particularly pertinent in Brazil because of the gravity of these issues there.

### **Setting: Social Issues in Brazil**

Brazil is ideal for my study because of the burgeoning social entrepreneurial activity there. Ashoka, the pioneering philanthropic organization of social entrepreneurship, has more social entrepreneurial fellows in Brazil than any other country



in the world (Ashoka, 2011). Rio de Janeiro is a particularly ideal location for my study, which focuses on social entrepreneurs dedicated to violence prevention and youth empowerment. In recent years the city has had some of the highest rates of violence within Brazil. At the same time, Rio de Janeiro has received international press for its innovative approaches to combating violence and other social issues, including the work of the social entrepreneurs in my study. In Chapters III and IV, I describe in more detail the Brazilian context and why Rio is an ideal setting for my study.

### **Overview of Chapters**

Chapter I described the purpose of the study, the overarching research questions, the rationale and its significance. The following chapters will describe the learning trajectories of this particular group of leaders, adding insight into how prior learning experiences informed the leaders in taking on a social entrepreneurial role. It will also describe the social capital that they had access to, which contributed not only to their learning trajectories, but also to the realization of their social entrepreneurial aspirations. Prior to describing the findings of the study, Chapter II presents an overview of relevant literature on social entrepreneurship, social capital, and learning. I discuss how the intersection of communities of innovation and social capital can potentially inform the field of social entrepreneurship. While communities of innovation serves as a model to make sense of how the process of innovation (a core characteristic of social entrepreneurship) takes place within a collaborative context, social capital literature adds insight into why some communities are more effective in their collaborative efforts than others. In my study, collective action takes the form of innovative learning and the

implementation of social entrepreneurial initiatives. Chapter III describes the qualitative methodological approach that I used and introduces the leaders in the study. Chapter IV grounds the research in the Brazilian context (specifically Rio), with special attention to contemporary socio-structural factors that set the stage for social problems such as high rates of urban violence, as well as civic efforts to overcome these social issues. The chapter also adds context to the social conditions that shaped and constrained both the learning opportunities of the leaders in my study, and their access to social capital. Chapter V presents data findings focused on the learning experiences that later informed the social entrepreneurs in taking on this leadership role, and an analysis of *how* the leaders in my study learned from prior experiences. Chapter VI describes the social networks and social capital that played a role in the leaders' social entrepreneurial trajectories, particularly during the initial conceptualization and implementation stages. I focus specifically on opportunities for social capital embedded in social ties with the leaders' target population and a network of actors, which I will refer to as a community of innovation. The final chapter summarizes the findings and practical implications for the fields of social entrepreneurship, learning and social capital, along with suggestions for future research.

## Chapter II

### A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Social Entrepreneurship and Social Entrepreneurs

##### Defining a Social Entrepreneur

The concept of entrepreneurship has traditionally been used within the realm of business and is defined broadly as applying ideas and resources in innovative ways that lead to financially profitable outcomes (Mair & Marti, 2006). The term, however, is increasingly being utilized within the context of solving social problems, where success is determined by the degree of social impact (Thake & Zadek, 1997). Banks (1972) was the first sociologist to use the term *social entrepreneur* in his research of social movements. His scholarship focused on activists, such as Robert Owen, who wanted to alleviate poverty through radical social reform. Since Banks first coined the term, debates over what precisely constitutes a social entrepreneur have flourished among practitioners and social scientists, alike. Some argue that the term should encompass only those who partake in commercial enterprise with a positive social impact (Sagawa & Segal, 2000). Others argue that the term emphasizes innovative initiatives intended to solve social problems, typically carried out in the third sector (Dees, 1998). More recent literature, with which I agree, argues that social entrepreneurship is “a way to catalyze social

transformation well beyond the solutions of the social problems that are the initial focus of concern” (Alvord, Brown, & Letts, 2009).

However defined, innovation is one of the core characteristics of social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship entails creating new solutions, rather than simply replicating existing “best practices,” when resources for a social problem are limited. When the resources to expand services for marginalized groups do not exist, social entrepreneurs develop innovative solutions that rely on a variety of resources and that serve a larger population more effectively than previous initiatives (Uphoff, Esman, & Anirudh, 1998).

The Grameen Bank, created by Muhammad Yunus, serves as a well-known contemporary model of a social entrepreneurial initiative. Yunus observed that the traditional banking system unfairly discriminated against the poor because they were seen as risky borrowers, unqualified for business venture credit. To subvert what he considered institutional discrimination by banks and to invest in the poor’s capacity to generate income, Yunus lent twenty-seven dollars each to forty-two poor women from the town of *Jobra*. The loans allowed them to earn money by tailoring garments, which in turn allowed them to pay back their loan and to earn enough money to buy food, send their children to school, and in general improve the quality of their family’s lives. Yunus’ bank sustained itself by charging interest on its loan and then recycling the capital to help other poor women. His model of banking was an innovative approach that altered the traditional way banks functioned by transforming who could receive a loan and how the capital on interest was used.

The term social entrepreneur became more prevalent after Bill Drayton founded in 1980 the non-profit organization *Ashoka: Innovators for the Public*. The organization defines a social entrepreneur as:

“...individuals with innovative solutions to society’s most pressing social problems. They are ambitious and persistent, tackling major social issues and offering new ideas for wide-scale change... social entrepreneurs find what is not working and solve the problem by changing the system, spreading the solution, and persuading entire societies to take new leaps.”

(Ashoka)

The first Ashoka Fellow was elected in 1981. Since then, the organization has given over 2,000 fellowships to entrepreneurs who they believe will transform society in a positive way. There are more Ashoka Fellows in Brazil than any other country.

### **Stages of Social Entrepreneurship**

Mair and Marti (2006) view social entrepreneurship as a process, which entails continuous interaction between the social entrepreneur and the context in which he or she is embedded. They point to four stages in this process including an “intention formation stage,” a “start-up stage,” “a growth stage,” and a “consolidation stage.” Unfortunately, they do not discuss in detail what these various stages entail.

Researchers working at *Ashoka* have categorized social entrepreneurship into four well-defined stages. In the first, an “apprenticeship” stage, social entrepreneurs not only begin acquiring the experiences, skills, and credentials needed to understand the social problem, but also to instigate major change (Bornstein, 2007). The second stage, the “launching” stage, is entered when a social entrepreneur begins testing innovative ideas. In the third stage, the “take-off” stage, one consolidates efforts through an organization

and refines and expands ideas. In this model, when the entrepreneur has had a measurable and noticeable impact on society, it is referred to as the “maturity” phase.

Martin and Osberg (2007) view social entrepreneurship as having three components or stages. The first entails “identifying a stable but inherently unjust equilibrium that causes the exclusion, marginalization, or suffering” of a particular population. The second requires identifying a potential opportunity to change this unjust equilibrium. The third component revolves around “forging a new stable equilibrium” in ways that not only alleviate the problems that the targeted population faces, but that also improve society at large.

While the models each provide a framework for describing and examining social entrepreneurship from conception through implementation, there are important differences in the ways in which each conceptualizes the stages of social entrepreneurship. Mair and Marti’s model begins with thinking about how to instigate positive social change (2006). Martin and Osberg’s (2007) go further in the first stage with identifying the social problem or the “unjust equilibrium” that leads to the marginalization of a particular population. In its first phase, the Ashoka’s model transitions the furthest towards actions. It necessitates gaining the skills and knowledge necessary to not only understand the social problem, but also acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to begin thinking about solutions (Bornstein, 2007).

The second stage of both Ashoka’s model (Bornstein, 2007) and Mair and Marti’s (2006) model include some form of action intended to address the social problem. Martin and Osberg’s (2007) model, on the other hand, lumps together intended actions and the

benefits of these actions in the final stage of their model. Ashoka's model and Martin and Osberg's model both include in their final stage some degree of measurable success as an outcome assessment.

Drawing upon the three aforementioned models and their associated stages, in this study I conceptualize social entrepreneurship to occur in four stages. The phases are sequentially organized in the following configuration: understanding the social problem to be addressed; conceptualizing an initiative to address the social problem; implementing the initiative; and expanding the program or scheme. I have drawn from Martin and Osberg's model by conceptualizing the initial stage of social entrepreneurship with understanding the social problem. This is an important place to start because how one understands and learns about a social problem is going to influence how he or she thinks about and develops an initiative to address the problem. My second stage draws from all three models. Mair and Marti (2006) refer to this as the "intention formation" stage. I combine Ashoka's "apprenticeship" and "launching" stage since both encompass generating and applying potential ideas to address the social problem at hand (Bornstein, 2007). I also draw from the second stage in Martin and Osberg's model. Adopting components, however, from the other models adds a layer of complexity to Martin and Osberg's oversimplified description of finding a potential opportunity to address an unjust equilibrium. I have intentionally included a stage on conceptualizing a solution to the social problem because prior research suggests that social entrepreneurs rely on a variety of experiences and resources to come up with innovative solutions (Bornstein, 2007; Johnson, 2000). However, it is not made clear upon what specific resources and experiences they rely. It is also not apparent how they combine these experiences and

resources to develop an innovative initiative. The third stage of implementing an initiative draws from Ashoka's "take-off" phase in which some form of consolidated effort through an organization or group effort occurs. The final stage entails expanding organized efforts in some form or systematic way so that the initiative reaches larger populations and/or has a larger systematic impact.

### **The Skills and Knowledge of a Social Entrepreneur**

Different skills and knowledge are necessary for each stage of social entrepreneurship. The first phase demands conceptualizing and understanding the root of the social problem to be addressed. As part of this process, Alvord et al. (2009) argue that the social entrepreneur must gain access to and understand the target population to benefit from the initiative. Martin and Osberg (2007) posit that they must also have an understanding of the structural issues that are at the root of the problem.

The second stage revolves around conceptualizing potential "solutions" or ways of addressing the social problem. According to Alvord et al. (2004), social entrepreneurial initiatives vary in form. Some focus on building local capacities to solve problems; others provide a "package" or program relying on the resources of multiple sources to address a widespread social problem. Additional initiatives use innovative approaches to build grassroots alliances that lead to changes in structures and institutions instrumental in reproducing power dynamics. Depending on the form of the initiative, different skills and knowledge are necessary to make the entrepreneurial efforts effective and sustainable. Alvord et al. (2009) state that social entrepreneurs must have the bridging capacity to work effectively across different constituencies. Most of the



entrepreneurs in their study had had prior experiences that positively influenced their capacity to build effective connections with diverse actors. They also found that social innovators tended to have adaptive skills that allowed them to recognize and respond to “changing contextual demands over a long term” (p.19).

The third stage of social entrepreneurship requires the capacity to mobilize resources (Martin & Osberg, 2007). Social entrepreneurs must have the technical, financial, political know-how and resources to initiate a non-profit or social program (Martin & Osberg, 2007). Other skills are needed to expand the impact of their initiative through organizational growth or by reaching a larger targeted audience. In Bornstein’s research on *Ashoka* fellows, the entrepreneurs spent a significant amount of time and energy on fundraising to make their initiative sustainable (2007). Alvord et al. (2009) found that external relations are important during all of the entrepreneurial phases, but become even more important as the initiative becomes more well-known. Some of the key external actors include those intended to benefit from the initiative, actors who can provide financial, technical or political resources, and allies who help support and carry out initiatives. While the expansion of initiatives is an important component of the social entrepreneurial process, this dissertation will only focus on the conceptualization and the formation of the initiative due to time limitations.

To acquire the necessary skills to take on the different phases of social entrepreneurship, the innovators must somehow access a diversity of experiences, resources and networks. Bornstein (2007) suggests that social entrepreneurs refer to a broad range of ideas, experiences and resources from different fields and disciplines. The

result, he argues, is often new configurations that may seem counterintuitive. However, Bornstein does not provide an analysis of the learning process; he does not specify what experiences and resources social entrepreneurs rely on to learn, nor does he provide a comparative analysis of how they combine their experiences, networks and resources in such a way that contributes to the entrepreneurial learning process. The lack of analysis on how entrepreneurs find and tap into resources, both embedded within and outside of social networks, is not surprising since the focus of his book, *“How to Change the World”* is on the non-profit organization *Ashoka*. In the book he presents descriptive case studies of a handful of *Ashoka* fellows. He presents a life history of each fellow, outlining numerous factors in their lives that led them to instigate their entrepreneurial initiative. His book focuses on individual characteristics of the social entrepreneurs, such as motivation and charisma. My study aims to add to social entrepreneurial literature by examining the types of experiences and social capital the leaders in my study access to learn relevant skills, knowledge and information, as well as analyzing the processes to understand *how* social entrepreneurs learned through these resources.

### **Limitations and Strengths of the Construct of Social Entrepreneurship**

Like any field of study, social entrepreneurship has its strengths and limitations. One concern is that the term has been defined so broadly and encompasses so many variations that it is hard at times to distinguish it from other social processes (Brouard & Larivet, 2010). While some see the fuzzy boundaries and definitions of social entrepreneurship as a detriment, I agree with Mari & Marti (2006), who perceive it as a “unique opportunity for researchers from different fields and disciplines such as

entrepreneurship, sociology and organization theory, to challenge and rethink central concepts and assumptions” (p. 2). One cause for definitional confusion is that scholars tend to stress different components of social entrepreneurship. Some focus on the person(s) engaged in social entrepreneurship (social entrepreneurs), others focus on the process of social entrepreneurship, while others focus on the outcomes and the organizational structure through which social entrepreneurial efforts occur. Mair & Marti (2006) advocate for qualitative studies that provide rich descriptions and a focus on processes to add clarity to questions such as how to define social entrepreneurship and what distinguishes a social entrepreneurial endeavor from other social initiatives (as well as what distinguishes a social entrepreneur from other leaders). My qualitative research approach (discussed in more detail in the following chapter) aims to offer insight into the process of social entrepreneurship, the actors involved, and the initiatives they instigate to carry out social entrepreneurial endeavors, as well as to turn an analytical eye on the social context in which these processes take place.

Another criticism of social entrepreneurship is that the traditional business ethos of entrepreneurship is not suitable for the social concerns that have traditionally been addressed through social disciplines and social movements (Shara, 2005). Proponents of social entrepreneurship argue that a primary distinction between entrepreneurship within the business sector and social entrepreneurship is that the principal driving force is to instigate positive social change versus the accumulation of wealth. It is also important to acknowledge that definitions of social entrepreneurship vary on a continuum ranging from an emphasis on the “social” to those that favor the more business-oriented “entrepreneurial” end of the spectrum (Dees, 1998). I agree with scholars, who warn that

initiatives that focus too heavily on the entrepreneurial end can potentially do more social harm than good. For example, the non-profit organization, *Endeavor*, aims to support high-impact entrepreneurs in emerging markets that “create thriving companies that employ hundreds, even thousands of people, and generate millions of wages and revenues” (<http://www.endeavor.org/>). The problem is that large companies, such as Wal-Mart, have been criticized for contributing to imbalances in the distribution of wealth due to significant discrepancies in employee salaries within such large companies. If Endeavor supports “high-impact” entrepreneurs that do not address issues such as the distribution of wealth, then Endeavor potentially is supporting processes that exacerbate social imbalances. Social entrepreneurial efforts that do not critically examine social processes that benefit some at the cost of others run the risk of instigating an initiative that feeds into the social imbalances that the social entrepreneurs are attempting to address. Because I see the potential danger in the assumption that an entrepreneurial idea is sufficient to solve complex social problems, I conceptualize social entrepreneurship in my study so that the social component is the predominate focus. In this context, “social” is broadly defined as initiatives aimed at improving the lives of traditionally marginalized populations.<sup>5</sup>

Whether a proponent or opponent, the reality is that the field of social entrepreneurship is expanding. Instead of disregarding the field of social entrepreneurship entirely due to the potential aforementioned limitations and risks, I wish to contribute to

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<sup>5</sup> To reiterate, I define social entrepreneurship in my study as a process that, through innovative initiatives, transforms society by addressing an immediate targeted problem and by instigating long-term changes in the system within which it is embedded. I define a social entrepreneur as a person or a group of people who act as social change agent(s) by creating innovative solutions to social problems that catalyze positive, long-term social transformation (Jacobi, 2006; Alvord, Brown & Letts, 2004; Bornstein, 1998).

the field in a proactive way by examining the processes that lead to innovative ideas that address dire social issues and play a role in social progress. I believe that the field has the potential to make important contributions to instigate positive social change. When done in a way that effectively balances the innovative component of social entrepreneurship with a careful eye on social processes, social entrepreneurship can lead to powerful positive outcomes. (Refer to Appendix F for a description of some of the social entrepreneurial initiatives in my study, whereby entrepreneurial efforts are aimed at fostering positive social change.)

Finally, I argue that studying social entrepreneurship in Brazil can make important contributions to the field by offering a distinct perspective, since scholarly work on social entrepreneurship has predominately evolved within the western context. According to Defourny (2010), the development of the concept of social entrepreneurship in the United States has been strongly influenced by large private foundations, while in the United Kingdom, the state has played a major role. In Europe, the emphasis has been on social economy and cooperatives. I argue that Brazil's active civic society, particularly its vibrant history of social movements, can offer invaluable lessons on the importance of collaborative efforts, as well as how to critically think about the social processes that led to the social problems that social entrepreneurship aims to address. Such critical reflection can potentially minimize the creation and implementation of social entrepreneurial initiatives that might exacerbate social problems instead of fixing them.

### **Social Capital**

One of the biggest limitations of literature written on social entrepreneurs is that it traditionally has focused on individual attributes (Drayton, 2002; Thompson et al., 2000).

Bornstein, for example, describes common personality attributes among the social entrepreneurs in his study (Bornstein, 2007). Little has been written on social entrepreneurs from a sociological perspective. Mair and Marti (2006) explicitly suggest studying the networks in which social entrepreneurs are embedded as an important angle to further the current body of literature on social entrepreneurs. In this section, I review the literature on social networks and social capital, and discuss how it relates to social entrepreneurs.

### **Defining Social Capital**

The term social network refers to a social structure made of “actors” connected to one another by a specific type of interdependency, such as kinship, friendship, work relationships or local proximity (Freeman, 2004). Social capital refers to the resources embedded in social networks that can be used for an individual or group’s benefit (Borgatti & Foster, 2003). Stanton-Salazar (2004) defines it as “those ‘connections’ to individuals and to networks that can provide access to resources and forms of support that facilitate the accomplishment of goals” (p. 18). A key component of social capital is not simply the social relationships that comprise the networks, but the access to resources through these relationships (Bourdieu, 1985; Coleman, 1988; Anheier, Gerhards & Romo, 1995; Lin, 1999b). Social capital is unique from other forms of capital because it inheres in the structure of its relationships (Portes, 1998). In order to have social capital, a person must relate to others—and it is these external relationships, not the person him or herself, that offers one an advantage.

Understanding the structure of the overall patterns of connections between actors in a network allows social scientists to understand the potential resources embedded in the networks. Further, the potential social capital within these networks partially depends on the kind and quality of relationships an individual has with other actors, as well as how those relationships are maintained. Social network researchers argue that the degree of cohesion among actors in the network matters. Benefits can come from belonging to a dense network of relationships as well as from being part of a more diffuse one.

Coleman (1988), for example, who has been credited with introducing and giving value to the concept of social capital among American social scientists (Portes, 1998), argues that social capital is a group-oriented asset that necessitates strong ties among a dense network. Strong ties refer to close relationships such as family members and close friends, while weak ties refer to acquaintances. In dense networks, most actors are linked together by numerous social connections. Coleman and Heffer (1988) purport that communities have a high potential for social capital when they have strong ties and dense networks because it is easier to negotiate values and to develop shared norms and reciprocity (Coleman, 1988), which are conducive to collective action. Social capital, according to Coleman, is dependent on reciprocity expectations and group enforcement of norms. Further, the level of trustworthiness within a social environment influences whether or not social obligations will be respected.

A growing body of research suggests that when trust exists among actors in a network, then they are more eager to engage in cooperative activity (Fukuyama, 1997). In support of this perspective, Putnam (1993) believes that communities with a large stock of social capital tend to be more successful in engaging in collective action than

communities with less social capital. Stocks of social capital, such as trust, networks and norms are generally cumulative, according to Putnam (1993), and successful collaboration in one endeavor builds connections that can help facilitate future collaboration. Further, cooperation among networks of actors is most easily sustained through repetitive engagement.

In order to encourage the development of social capital, Putnam (1993, 2000) advocates that actors partake in civic engagement or activities that form linkages between actors, which leads to a sense of belonging and a sense of connection to others. Such interactions over time foster norms of reciprocity and the actors in the network feel as if they can count on one another. In Chapter VI I examine opportunities for social capital embedded in social ties with the leaders' target population. I touch upon how, over time and through repetitive interactions, trust evolved between the social entrepreneurs and actors identified as the target population. During these interactions, the social entrepreneurs consistently acted in ways that demonstrated their investment in the well-being of the target population. I also describe opportunities for social capital within a dense network of actors that I refer to as a community of innovation. I touch upon how trust evolves through collaborative interactions, which facilitates the network's capacity for future collective action. In this case, collective action takes the form of innovative learning and the implementation of a social entrepreneurial initiative.

While some sociologists conclude that dense networks are the key to generating forms of social capital such as trust (Coleman & Heffer, 1888; Coleman, 1993; Putnam, 1993), others focus on linkages to social networks beyond one's immediate social group, arguing that connections and resources embedded in these outside social networks



potentially lead to a wider breadth of information and knowledge. Granovetter (1973, 1983) argues for “the strength in weak ties” because connections with casual contacts potentially open up access to new information and resources beyond those available in one’s immediate social circles. Along similar lines, Burt (1992) concludes that the relative absence of ties, or “structural holes,” is valuable because dense networks tend to lead to recurring resources. On the contrary, social capital embedded in open networks can potentially lead to new knowledge and resources. Mehra, Kilduff and Brass (2001) argue that actors who reach out to diverse groups are more likely to do well in their professional careers than those who stay within their own social networks because they have more access to resources and information. In the context of social entrepreneurs, who must have access to a wide breadth of resources and information, this is an important consideration.

Hakkerainen, Palonen, Passvola and Lehtinen (2004) argue that there are both benefits and limitations to weak or strong ties within networks in regards to learning and knowledge exchange. They posit that weak ties (acquaintances) based in knowledge exchange provide new and simple information that lacks context. Strong ties (close friends and family), on the other hand, run the risk of being redundant and context-bound. They also argue that strong ties generally produce social and emotional support and are typically linked to personal trusting relationships. As I will describe in Chapter VI, the social entrepreneurs described benefits of both strong and weak ties, including knowledge exchange and social and emotional support, resources that ultimately influenced their social entrepreneurial trajectories.

### **Benefits and Risks of Social Capital**

Sociologists often apply the concept of social capital as a predictor of individual achievement. Portes (1998) and Adler and Kwon (2002) describe three main benefits associated with social capital. Initially, social capital opens up the amount of information available to individuals and groups, facilitating more-informed decisions. For example, in my study, I will describe how the target population shared information with the social entrepreneurs about social problems in their communities. Social capital also potentially leads to heightened power, control and influence. If a social entrepreneur is affiliated with a respected organization or university, then his or her organization may potentially gain symbolic capital. Finally, Adler and Kwon (2002) state that social capital potentially builds solidarity, which potentially leads to less formal control since groups with high solidarity follow similar norms. For instance, if teenagers denounce the use of violence against other teenagers because of social norms reinforced by a social entrepreneurial initiative dedicated to non-violence, then it is possible that youth will abide by this norm.

Despite a large volume of research suggesting that social capital is a favorable asset, social networks and the social capital embedded within relationships are not innately positive. There are potential negative effects of social relationships. Labianca and Brass (2006) argue that negative relationships have a greater impact on people than positive ones. This argument is particularly relevant in the *favelas* of Rio where negative relationships with the police and drug lords dictate the quality of life of many *favelados* (Arias, 2004; Penglase, 2005; Caldeira, 1999). In terms of the negative impact of social capital, Adler and Kwon (2002), as well as Portes (1998), have pointed out the danger of

“overembeddeness,” which excludes outsiders. Portes (1998) also points out that social capital can lead to excess demands on group members which restrict individual freedoms.

### **Types of Social Capital Conducive to Social Entrepreneurship**

Social entrepreneurs need to have the capacity to make connections among different stakeholders since their work aspires for social transformation. Closure and bridging reflect two different functions of social capital. Closure helps bond individuals in dense networks and intensive relationships within a community or organization, while bridging helps provide a more dispersed and extensive network (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). As I will discuss in my study, the bridging ties or open networks that the social entrepreneurs had with some of the actors considered to be part of the target population led to an expanded network of members of the target population, which opened up new sources of information about social problems of interest to the social entrepreneurs. Also, the actors who made up the communities of innovation were entrenched in their own networks, and served as a bridge tie to other networks. Such bridge ties enhanced the overall social networks of the communities of innovation.

Just as important, dense networks can provide certain resources that open networks cannot. Dense networks are conducive to building trust through mutually shared experiences (Putnam, 1993). Trust fosters collaborative action that open networks cannot. In the next section, I describe a concept called a community of innovation, which is a model aimed at understanding how collaborative innovative learning processes occur within a dense network of actors. I employ the concept for my study in an effort to

understand how the leaders conceptualized their innovative projects. In the context of social entrepreneurship, communities of innovation serve as an opportunity for social capital, as defined by Brehm and Rahn (1997, p. 999), “the web of cooperative relationships between citizens that facilitate resolution of collective action problems.” I describe the structural and relational factors that contribute to the accumulation of social capital within this network, which plays an important role in the leaders’ social entrepreneurial trajectory. It is necessary to point out that the target population and actors who make up the communities of innovation are not exclusively separate; in some cases, actors considered part of the larger network of target population members are also some of the actors who make up the communities of innovation.

In summary, social capital facilitates the achievement of certain goals that could not be done in its absence (Putnam, 1993). The leaders in my study could not have accomplished their social entrepreneurial endeavors without the help of others. My study examines some of the social relationships in which they invested, which led to an accumulation of social assets. Specifically, the social credits they built up with the target population and the communities of innovation ultimately facilitated the leaders’ capacity to take on the role of a social entrepreneur.

## **Learning**

### **Conceptualizations of Learning**

Since little research explicitly examines how social entrepreneurs learn, I turn briefly to an array of literatures on learning. I present three overarching

conceptualizations, or metaphors<sup>6</sup>, of learning – acquisition, participation (Sfard, 1998) and knowledge creation (Paavola & Hakkarainen, 2005). Each has its unique definitions and theories, and I draw from the overarching concepts in order to offer a more comprehensive understanding of learning. Among these landscapes of learning theories, I employ experiential learning within the larger body of adult education to shed light onto how the social entrepreneurs in my study made sense of prior experiences and in what ways these experiences informed their future actions. I also utilize a concept called communities of innovation in my study in order to understand how the social entrepreneurs came up with innovative ideas for their initiatives through collaborative processes.

### **Acquisition Metaphor**

A prevalent body of literature has conceptualized learning as a process of concept development occurring within a person's mind, resulting in the transmission and accumulation of knowledge (Sfard, 1998). The acquisition metaphor not only understands learning as a cognitive process, but also includes constructivist models. In this school of thought, learning is about the development of ideas and meaning making within the individual mind (Mezirow, 1990). Adult education literature traditionally has focused on cognitive and constructivist models of learning (Fenwick, 2003). I pull from experiential learning theory, couched in adult education, to understand how learning (meaning making) happens through experiences. Experiential learning is arguably one of the most

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<sup>6</sup> Sfard (1998) used the term *metaphor* to represent what she believes captures the overarching trends of thinking on learning.

significant areas of research and practice within contemporary adult education (Michelson, 1996), as adults do much of their learning this way (Smith, 2001).

Experiential learning has generally been described in two contrasting ways within adult education literature (Smith, 2001). First, the term is used to describe a process of learning in which students are given the chance to acquire and apply knowledge and skills in an immediate setting. In other words, it involves a “direct encounter with the phenomena being studied rather than merely thinking about the encounter, or only considering the possibility of doing something about it” (Borzak, 1981). The second type of experiential learning is “education that occurs as a direct participation in the events of life” (Houle, 1980, p. 221). Here, learning is not sponsored by some formal educational institution but by people themselves. Learning is achieved through cognitive reflection upon everyday experience, which leads to informed actions in future experiences.

Two important themes within experiential learning literature are continuity and reflection. Continuity refers to cognitively making connections between previous, current and future experiences. Reflection, understood as “a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciation” (Boud et al., 1985, p. 19), is considered an important process to enhance connections among experiences, leading to more complex ways of thinking.

Critical reflection is a specific type of reflection, which goes beyond thinking about personal experiences, and is aimed at understanding social dynamics of power and ways of interrupting oppressive social processes (Mezirow, 1990; Brookfield, 1995, 2005). Grounded in resistance pedagogy and influenced by critical theory, it is perceived

as a cognitive action that traces complex power relations and their consequences, in which the ultimate purpose is to encourage social action for a more just society.

Experiential learning can add important insight into how prior experiences inform social entrepreneurs. For example, all of the entrepreneurs in Bornstein's (2007) case studies described a range of experiential learning, including learning from work experience, learning from their community, from social experiences, or simply from observing their surroundings in day-to-day interactions. However, Bornstein does not analyze *how* learning happens through these different experiences, or how prior experiences potentially inform future perceptions and actions. My research examines how the prior experiences of the social entrepreneurs in my study informed their future actions when taking on the role of a social entrepreneur. The concept of critical reflection is particularly relevant since the leaders in my study are dedicated to addressing social imbalances that lead to the marginalization of specific groups of people. Engaging in critical reflection can potentially encourage social entrepreneurs to think critically about the ubiquitous power dynamics within social relations and ways of overcoming oppressive processes.

### **Participation Metaphor**

Another prevailing body of literature has conceptualized learning as a social phenomenon (Sfard, 1998). In this school of thought, learning does not take place as an isolated experience within the minds of the individual, but is more about situated learning and how interaction among social actors (and the environment in which it takes place) plays a role in the learning process and the construction of shared knowledge. Knowledge

from this perspective is inescapably tied to the context and practice in which it evolves and is used, and social learning theorists are interested in understanding how socially constructed knowledge is understood among the participating actors.

One of the most prevailing concepts coming out of the social learning lineage is a community of practice (CoP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Simply defined, a community of practice is a group of individuals with a common interest, craft, and/or a profession; Participants in the community learn from each other and have an opportunity to develop themselves through the process of sharing information and experiences with actors in the group (Lave & Wenger, 1991). At the heart of the theory is how novices learn through continuous, active, engaged social interaction in a situated community to obtain tacit practical knowledge. Lave and Wenger (1991) purport that individuals learn as they interact with the community, and therefore must engage in its assumptions, rules, patterns of relationships, cultural values, language, objects, and achieving its immediate purpose. Knowledge is not defined as a positivist truth, but whatever is considered relevant in a particular situation, and it is an outcome of the interaction of the aforementioned elements. The focus is on improving one's capacity to participate effectively in specific practices in order to obtain a legitimate role and identity within a community. Lave and Wenger's research proposed a new approach to understanding learning as more than acquiring knowledge; they purported that learning is about identity formation and engages the entire person through an interactive process. Situated theorists encourage questions such as: How do the various participants interact together and what meanings are constructed? How do the interactions and meanings enhance or limit desired learning?

Although CoP literature describes how community members interact and how



new ideas evolve due to the integration of new people into the community, the focus of communities of practice traditionally has not been about innovation and knowledge creation, but about obtaining a status of expertise and understanding how members of a community of practice learn already existing knowledge. Social learning theories in general have been helpful in understanding how participants of a community develop shared meanings, cultural practices and expertise. However, it does not explain how communities function when their primary focus is not competence or acquiring knowledge, but innovation and knowledge creation.

### **Knowledge Creation Metaphor (Innovative Learning)**

A third archetype or paradigm of learning is innovative learning and innovative knowledge communities (Paavola & Hakkarainen, 2005). Innovative learning researchers tend to conceptualize “learning and inquiry as a process of creating or articulating knowledge rather than just assimilating existing knowledge or participating in prevailing practices” (Paavola & Hakkarainen, 2005, p. 540). Simply put, the knowledge-creation approach addresses the need to understand how learning as a process leads to new ideas, concepts, artifacts and ways of doing things. According to Paavola & Hakkarainen, (2005) “Characteristic of the knowledge –creation approach is to examine learning in terms of creating social structures and collaborative processes that support knowledge advancement and innovation” (p. 539).

A number of theories and models exist that aim to understand the collaborative processes and social structures that encourage innovative learning and knowledge advancement (Engeström, 1987, 1999; Bereiter, 2002; Frank & Shah, 2003; Coakes &

Smith, 2007; West, 2009). Across models and theories are commonalities that inform the study of innovative learning and knowledge advancement. First and most obvious, prior innovative learning research suggests in one form or another that learning and inquiry is a process of creating or articulating knowledge instead of simply assimilating already existing knowledge into practices (Engeström, 1999). Second, prior research and models suggest that innovative processes happen in communities or groups of actors (Engeström, 1999; West, 2009). While the aforementioned authors perceive innovative learning inextricably as a social process, they also argue that just as valuable are each of the actors' unique competencies and efforts. Individual input of actors in innovation communities primarily serve the collaborative efforts of the group to create something new, and the social environment is conducive to encouraging individual initiative. Models of knowledge creation advocate that the "agent" of knowledge creation is not an individual person, but instead an actor "embedded in a community or the community itself" (Paavola & Hakkarainen, 2005, p 551).

While some might see these conceptualizations of learning as contradictory, I argue that they can fruitfully be engaged as complementary. Each of the metaphors illuminates distinct aspects of learning (and therefore offer relative advantages) that the others cannot, which makes it unfavorable to choose one over the other. I perceive the metaphors of learning not to be mutually exclusive, but rather complementary ways of thinking about the complexities of learning. Embracing a pluralistic stance and drawing from the strengths of the various perspectives lends itself to a more layered and complex understanding of learning. If I were to engage in only one conceptualization of learning, I would run the risk of equating the exclusivity of the perspective as certainty and a given,

when in fact they are constructed concepts. As Sfard (1998) states, a pluralistic perspective “may be enough to disclose the arbitrary nature of some of the generally accepted classifications” (p. 11).

### **Community of Innovation**

One of the models couched in the innovative learning paradigm that I use in my study is called a community of innovation.<sup>7</sup> A community of innovation is a network of actors that focus on the creation and support of innovative ideas, concepts and products (Grimaldi & Rogo, 2009; Schloen, 2005). Coakes and Smith (2007) define it as a form of communities of practice dedicated to the support of innovation. West (2009) states that a community of innovation is a model aimed at conceptualizing and understanding how innovation evolves within a social structure made up of a particular group of actors (West, 2009). While Coakes and Smith utilize the model to understand how a community of innovation supports the development of an individual (“innovation champion”) within the community, I adhere to West’s (2009) conceptualization, which focuses on the entire community in which innovative learning takes place. In describing the social structure that makes up a community of innovation, West (2009) states that it typically is a network of interdependent actors, made up of individuals who work together towards a common goal, based on self-directed motivation and the belief in the importance of their common interest. The actors tend to bring diverse perspectives, skills (distinct professional backgrounds), and other diverse resources to the community of innovation.

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<sup>7</sup> I came across the concept of a community of innovation only after analyzing my data and therefore it was not a core concept in my original research proposal. However, the concept resonated so well with the findings from my initial analysis that it became an integral component of my study.

According to West (2009) creativity literature and social learning theory have informed the concept of a community of innovation. Creativity literature provides insight into the processes involved in the creation of an original and useful product.<sup>8</sup> Literature on creativity and innovation in recent years has emphasized the importance of collaboration (Montorui & Purser, 1999; Paulus & Nijstad, 2003) and has suggested that specific processes occur during group innovation. Recent research also suggests that for collaborative innovation to work well, there needs to be a sense of interdependence and trust among community members for actors to feel comfortable enough to share new ideas. Social capital refers to “features of social organization, such as ...trust, that facilitate coordination and collaborative actions” (Putnam, 1993, p 2). Social capital theory therefore, can inform communities of innovation literature about processes and social structures that help build trust among actors, which ultimately can foster collective action (Putnam, 1999). In this scenario, collective action refers to conceptualizing and developing innovative ideas and implementing them. A community of innovation is more likely to work together more effectively when it has a substantial amount of social capital in the form of trust (Putnam, 1993). Equally as important, research advocates for substantial diversity to enhance alternative perspectives (Justesen, 2004). Social learning theory, according to West (2009), informs communities of innovation because it offers insight into the process of learning through social interaction. Specifically, it brings understanding regarding “how knowledge is negotiated externally to an individual through interactions with an environment and other persons” (p. 327). Drawing from

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<sup>8</sup> West uses creativity and innovation interchangeably but clarifies that he prefers the term innovation because it is more comprehensive, including the environment in which a new idea evolves and the people involved in its evolution and implementation.

studies grounded in social learning theory, West (2009) explains that the process of innovative learning entails inquiry, group reflection, innovation that evolves from an interdependent process drawing from diverse perspectives and resources, new visions and goals, implementation, and continuous innovation through practice (Engeström, 1999; Bielaczyc & Collins, 2006; Sawyer, 2008; West, 2009). Since both communities of innovation and communities of practice evolved out of the same lineage of social learning theory, it is not surprising that there are similarities. But there are also important distinctions. First, the focus of communities of innovation is not about obtaining tacit knowledge and achieving a status of expertise. Instead the focus is on knowledge creation and the development of innovative concepts, ideas and artifacts. While learning is achieved by “doing” in communities of practice, learning is achieved by creating in communities of innovation. The end result of a community of practice is that it produces practice, while in a community of innovation it leads to innovation. Communities of practice develop competence while communities of innovation encourage entrepreneurship.

Literature on innovative learning, including the communities of innovation model, is particularly relevant to today’s knowledge networked society, which demands that the economic sector come up with new ideas and artifacts. However, little literature exists on how communities of innovation can be applied toward developing new ideas, artifacts and concepts for social good or toward positive social change. Accordingly, I apply the concept to my study of social entrepreneurs. I also examine the intersection of communities of innovation with the concept of social capital, understood in this context as a group-oriented asset within a dense network (Coleman, 1983). It is the social

organization “that supports the process of learning through interaction.... The quality of the social processes and relationships within which learning interactions take place is especially influential on the quality of the learning outcomes in collaborative approaches” (Allen, 2007). My study examines the potential opportunities for social capital within this particular network and how this social structure potentially encourages innovative learning.

In sum, my study pulls from various frames of learning that I perceive as complementary and that add important insight into the complexities of learning. A pluralistic perspective enhances the possibility of a more comprehensive understanding of learning (Sfard, 1998), which can potentially inform future research and practice within the field of social entrepreneurship. I understand the phenomena of learning to occur on a number of planes. First I examine the learning process that happens at the cognitive level of the social entrepreneurs. However, I also perceive learning at this level as inextricably tied to the context and practice in which it evolves and I aim to understand how meaning making is influenced by the context in which it arises. Further, I draw from literature that focuses on learning as a collaborative process aimed at innovation and knowledge creation. This body of literature is particularly relevant to social entrepreneurship because one of the core characteristics of the field is innovation. Setting the stage for learning on all levels are the social structures and institutions in which the social entrepreneurs are embedded that potentially support and/or constrain the learning processes.

### **The Third Sector**

All of the social entrepreneurs in my study approach their work through the “third sector”—a term that is used differentially across countries and organizations. Creating a conceptual model of third sector organizations is a challenge due to the broadly defined dimensions of the sector (Weisbrod, 1998). In its simplest sense, it is a range of organizations that are separate from the state sector and the for-profit sector (Hammelstein, 1993; Gunn, 2004). With that said, the third sector often experiences significant “interpenetration” with these other two sectors (Candler, 2000). This definition encompasses a wide range of organizations that vary substantially in structure, size and purpose. The country-specific contexts in which these organizations operate internationally determine the heterogeneity of categories (Anheier & Seibel, 1990).

Landim (1997), one of the most cited Brazilian experts on the third sector, disaggregates Brazilian third sector organizations into nonprofit organizations, associations, charitable organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOS), and foundations. The contextual cultural and institutional constraints significantly influence how an organization evolves and operates. In Brazil, the historical evolution of third sector organizations informs the sector’s current state. In Brazilian third sector literature, the sector has typically been viewed in opposition to the state and the for-profit sector. The strong anti-state perspective in Brazil presented in the research reflects the fact that many third sector groups that began in the 1960s did so as a reaction against the military government. While there is still a strong liberal stance within the third sector in Brazil,

perspectives toward working with the state in solving social problems have shifted since the end of the military regime.

Since 1988, Brazil has seen an impressive growth of non-profit organizations. From 1996 – 2005, the number of registered non-profit organizations increased by 157 percent (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2008). Between 2002 and 2005, the opening of new institutions increased by 22 percent. Today there are over 338,000 registered non-profit organizations in Brazil. Some researchers (Caldeira & Holston, 1999; Jacobi, 2006; Landim & Thompson, 1997) suggest that this increase in activity among civic society is contributing to the democratization and “moralization” of Brazil. I discuss in more detail in Chapter IV the social context that shaped Brazil’s third sector in recent times. Prior to this, Chapter III will describe the methodological approach I used to gather data for my study.



## Chapter III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This study aims to answer the following question: How do social entrepreneurs access and utilize skills and information to meet the responsibilities of this role? What types of experiences do they participate in and rely on to learn the skills and knowledge necessary for this role? Further, what are the social networks in which they are embedded or become embedded, and what is the interplay between their social capital and the learning process? To answer these questions, the study hinged upon the case studies of 27 social entrepreneurs. Since I was interested in studying how social entrepreneurs learn, the case study approach proved an ideal method (Yin, 2004). Previous research also suggests that the case study method is effective for studying issues related to social entrepreneurship and social networks. For example, in his study on violence reduction efforts in Rio's *favelas*, Arias (2004) advocates for conducting future case studies in marginalized areas in Latin America. He argues that only detailed local case studies can provide the nuanced insights necessary to understand the contextually based social dynamics that can potentially heighten the democratization of marginalized areas.

Sociological case studies involve a detailed and often subtle understanding of the social organization of a person's day-to-day life. According to Yin (2003), "case studies are an ideal method of choice when the phenomena under study are not readily distinguishable from their context." This certainly was the case for my study, which

attempted to understand how social entrepreneurs learned from experiences to take on the role of being a social entrepreneur, and the social capital that played a role in this story.

To conduct these case studies, I relied on document analysis of annual reports and the Web sites of the social entrepreneurs' organizations, a two-tiered orally administered interview process with the 27 social entrepreneurs that included a structured interview and a semi-structured life history interview, interviews with other actors associated with the case study participants, and participant observation. To enhance the study's validity, or "the correctness or credibility" of my data and the analysis process (Maxwell, 2005, p. 106), I triangulated data from this variety of sources.<sup>9</sup>

I first conducted a structured interview in order to obtain an understanding of the breadth of experiences that social entrepreneurs used to learn and the landscape of social networks in which the case studies were embedded. The structured interview used a pre-determined set of questions to guide the interview (see Appendix A). Immediately following the structured interview, I conducted a more in-depth life history interview with a semi-structured protocol (see Appendix B). The structured interview took between twenty minutes to one hour, while the life history interview generally lasted anywhere from one to three hours. Conducting the structured interviews prior to the life history interviews allowed me to identify topics that emerged from the responses that I could inquire about with more depth during the life history interview. Stated differently, the structured interview served as a springboard to delve deeper into process-oriented questions during the life history interviews. For example, one question asked how many

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<sup>9</sup> Triangulation "is an effort to see if what we are observing and reporting carries the same meaning when found under different circumstances" (Stake, 1995, p. 113).

people outside of the leaders played a pivotal role in coming up with the innovative component of the social entrepreneurial initiative. During the life history interview, I asked detailed follow-up questions about these individuals and how they fit into the larger learning trajectories of the leaders. Conducting the structured interviews first also provided an allotted time for participants to become comfortable with my presence prior to delving into the more personal details discussed during their life histories.

The life history interviews allowed me to collect more nuanced data about *the processes through which* social entrepreneurs learned or accessed and used information and resources (Yin, 2003). The interviews focused on how each participant learned through experiences to take on the responsibility of a social entrepreneur and the networks that played a role in this process. I asked the participants questions about skills and knowledge that prior research suggested were necessary to take on the role of a social entrepreneur. These served as indicators of how they learned. They included but were not limited to: how did the social entrepreneur learn about the social problem that he or she is attempting to tackle? How did the social entrepreneur learn how to conceptualize the innovative initiative? How did the social entrepreneur learn about the technical components necessary to start a formal initiative? (Refer to Appendix B). These indicators were intended to provide an understanding of how the social entrepreneurs learn in general. The semi-structured questions that I asked during the life history interviews allowed the participants to talk about topics outside of the interview protocol and provided more leeway for them to include their interests and insights in the interviews.

Unlike previous studies, this research did not seek to answer why leaders succeeded in becoming social entrepreneurs. To do such a study, one quite different from the one I executed, would demand that a cohort of social entrepreneurs considered successful (by some highly debatable criterion) in fulfilling this role would be compared with a cohort who attempted to fulfill this role but did not succeed. Instead, this study moved away from studying shared or common characteristics of the entrepreneurs and examined the more *social aspects* of becoming social entrepreneurs, such as participatory innovative learning. This understudied process of taking on the role of a social entrepreneur has the potential to illustrate the existing and emerging patterns of learning experiences and social capital utilized by these innovators, especially in the third sector in Rio de Janeiro.

In the following sections I explain the research design and methodology that I employed for engaging the research questions. The chapter begins with the selection of my research site, my sampling selection, and how I gained access to this social entrepreneurial population. I then describe the data collection process, beginning with my pilot study, and including each of the research tools and analytical approaches I utilized to answer my research questions. I finish the chapter with a description of limitations of the study.

### **Site Selection**

I conducted my research in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil over a nine-month period. Rio de Janeiro was an ideal city to study social entrepreneurs focused on violence prevention

and the empowerment of poor urban youth, for several reasons. Rio has experienced high rates of violence, economic inequality, racial and ethnic discrimination, gang and drug activity, and an overall marginalization of *favela* residents, so Rio garners much attention from third-sector social entrepreneurs. While Brazil overall has witnessed a major expansion of social entrepreneurship (Ashoka, 2011), Rio de Janeiro in particular has boasted an impressive number of initiatives dedicated to prevention of violence and youth empowerment.

### **Participant Selection**

To best study the daily worlds and learning processes of social entrepreneurs in Rio de Janeiro who have focused their efforts on violence prevention or the empowerment of poor urban youth by initiating non-profit organizations and civic sector programs, I developed a database of leaders who fell within my specific research parameters (discussed later). I relied on the following major sources (refer to Appendix C) to develop a catalog of non-profit organizations in Rio de Janeiro that focused on violence prevention or empowerment of poor urban youth living in Rio's *favelas*, suburbs and other marginalized spaces: personal contacts, *AjudaBrasil*, *Rede de Informações para o Terceiro Setor* (Rits), Brazil Foundation, Ashoka, The Directory of Development Organizations (DevDir), *Associação Brasileira de Organizações Não Governamentais* (ABONG), AVINA, and *Federação de Órgãos para Assistência Social e Educacional* (FASE). The nine data sources allowed me to create a comprehensive list of non-profit organizations in Rio de Janeiro. They represented diverse sources to guarantee a wide-ranging and comprehensive list. The sources ranged from personal contacts, three

databases sponsored by three distinct Brazilian non-profit organizations focused on organizing and disseminating information on third-sector organizations in Brazil, a Brazilian-based philanthropic organization focused on supporting civil society initiatives, three databases supported by international philanthropic organizations, and one database created by an international non-profit that publishes information on development organizations.

I began this database project with the personal contacts I had developed from my participation in a Teachers College Peace Education course in Rio de Janeiro several years ago. During the course, we visited over twenty non-profit organizations aimed at transforming Brazilian society through third sector initiatives. I had remained in contact with some of the people I met during this course. Several of them had connections with some of the social entrepreneurs I wished to include in my study. Personal contacts were a good beginning point because I had learned from my prior research experience in Brazil that gaining access to and cooperation with research participants was significantly easier when I knew someone in their social network.

*AjudaBrasil* is a database similar to the CARES directory in New York City, which lists organizations for those interested in volunteering or donating resources to NGOs. Dr. Elisa Reis, a Brazilian professor and expert in the field of Brazilian third sector organizations, had recommended the Rits and ABONG databases to me as reliable and comprehensive database sources. The Devdir database was the most comprehensive database I had come across from an international perspective.

I chose the databases created by the Brazil Foundation, IBASE, AVINA and Ashoka for three reasons. First, I had direct contacts with people at the Brazil Foundation, who previously said they would help me gain access to social entrepreneurs that fit the parameters of my study. Second, these four organizations worked with an impressive number of initiatives focused on marginalized communities within Rio de Janeiro. Members of these organizations inevitably would know of social entrepreneurs that might have “fallen through the cracks” of the previously mentioned third sector databases. I was particularly interested in Ashoka because they had the most comprehensive database specific to social entrepreneurs. They were (and still are) considered one of the leading expert organizations on social entrepreneurship. In the end, their database offered the most robust list of leaders who fit the profile of my study. They also played a critical role in reaching out to leaders to participate in my study (to be discussed later).

Because the parameters of my study included only social entrepreneurs dedicated to violence prevention and the empowerment of marginalized youth in Rio, I disaggregated non-profit organizations that are dedicated to these issues from non-profit organizations that are focused on other issues. I developed my own categorization system of types of organizations (refer to Appendix D) in order to disaggregate which social entrepreneurs to include in my study and which to exclude. This process was challenging because of the socially constructed nature of the categories. Each database utilized a unique categorization system and many of the non-profit organizations could have fallen under a number of the different groupings.

I included non-profit organizations and programs that fell under the category of education, youth development, human rights, and violence prevention. I then needed to distinguish a social entrepreneur from a person who simply initiated a non-profit organization or civic program. I asked the following questions to determine which initiators of non-profit organizations would be included in this study: Did they conceptualize and instigate an initiative in the third sector geared toward violence prevention or the empowerment of poor youth living in Rio's *favelas* or other marginalized spaces? Does the initiative not only address the immediate problem affecting a specific population, but also attempt to instigate social transformation beyond the target population? In other words, does the initiative specifically attempt to change or "transform" the larger social context in which the problem is embedded? Is the initiative innovative (within the context of Rio de Janeiro) with the potential of impacting a larger population or the structures in which the initiative is embedded? Is there potential for scaling up? Is the initiative still functioning? Is the person or group of people who started the initiative still with the organization?<sup>10</sup> I put the list of leaders in an Excel spreadsheet

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<sup>10</sup> Most of the leaders seemed to have a neutral stance regarding the term social entrepreneur. However, in a number of cases leaders embraced the term, self-identifying themselves as a social entrepreneur in response to the structured interview question regarding their professional title. On the other end of the spectrum, three of the leaders problematized the term social entrepreneurship, or more specifically Ashoka's version of it. All three leaders had been considered for an Ashoka fellowship but ultimately did not receive it. According to the three leaders, Ashoka wanted them to change aspects of their initiative in order to align with Ashoka's conceptualization of a social entrepreneur, and they were reluctant to do so. To be specific, Ashoka encouraged them to think about ways of potentially scaling up their initiative, and two of the leaders did not feel that reaching a larger target audience was the most effective way that they could instigate positive social change. Another leader disliked the emphasis on innovation and felt that if an already existing approach showed signs of being effective, then why not build upon these methods? While most of the leaders in my study did not explicitly question the concept of social entrepreneurship, the biggest concern I heard during my time in Brazil was the North's individualist conceptualization of the term. The idea of an individual social entrepreneur responsible for and credited with solving social problems was perceived as a "hero" ideal exported from the United States. Instead, addressing complex social problems such as violence was more often perceived as necessitating the efforts of numerous players.



and filled in “yes” or “no” to the above questions. I included in my study leaders who had a row of “yes” answers. I continued adding to the database once in Brazil, relying on a snowball sampling technique in which existing research participants suggested future participants. In total I identified 46 social entrepreneurs who potentially matched the criteria for my study. For eight of the leaders, I wanted to ask additional questions since the written information I had read about them had suggested that they met the parameters of my study but did not directly speak to my criteria. For various reasons, I was not able to reach these leaders. Consequently, my final universal sample population was 38, but it is important to mention that the number might have been as big as 46 social entrepreneurs. Of the 38 social entrepreneurs that I was certain fit the research parameters, 27 agreed to partake in the structured and semi-structured interview of my study. Eight of the 27 participants were female, 15 self-identified themselves as white and 21 out of 27 had a college degree or higher. 16 participants identified themselves as part of the target population. The tables in Appendix E presents a demographic profile of the 27 leaders, as well as a profile of their initiatives, including the size, primary target population, and the main objective(s) of the social entrepreneurial organizations. To give a sense of what these initiatives looked like in practice, I describe in more detail a number of the initiatives in Appendix F.

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Such a social-oriented approach and perspective aligns with Brazilian culture. Since the construct of the concept social entrepreneurship has predominately evolved within the US and Europe, studying the process of social entrepreneurship within the Brazilian context offers an opportunity to expand upon current research. As mentioned in Chapter II, despite its potential limitations, I chose to keep the term social entrepreneurship as a central concept in my study because the field is growing and I aim to contribute to the this body of research in a proactive way by examining the processes that lead to innovative ideas aimed at addressing dire social issues and promoting social justice.

### **Data Collection**

As previously mentioned, I used multiple methodologies to collect data to answer my research questions: document analysis of annual reports and the Web sites of the social entrepreneurs' organizations, orally administered structured interviews, orally administered semi-structured life history interviews, interviews with other actors associated with the case study participants, and participant observation. The data collection entailed a cyclical process in which the data from the various methods were cross-referenced and informed each other. One of the reasons for using different methods was to heighten reliability and validity (Maxwell, 2005). In this section, I discuss the different methods I used to collect data and the various approaches to analyzing the data.

### **Review of Web Sites and Other Written Data**

I began my data collection prior to my fieldwork in Brazil by reading material written on the social entrepreneurs in my study. I read the Web pages and annual reports of the organizations initiated by the social entrepreneurs, as well as written material on the lives of the leaders through Web sites such as Ashoka. As I read, I cut and pasted in a Word document information that I thought addressed my primary research questions. I then color-coded information that touched upon experiences, social actors and social

networks that seemed relevant to the learning trajectories of the social entrepreneurs and the evolution of the social entrepreneurial initiatives. The purpose of reviewing Web sites and annual reports was threefold. First, gathering such information provided me with a concrete understanding of the potential landscape of types of experiences that social entrepreneurs relied on to learn and insight into the social networks and social capital with which they interacted. This data guided the construction of my structured interview and semi-structured life history interview protocols. Second, during the life history interviews, I was able to confirm the accuracy of the written information, which often led to additional stories and information about the leaders' histories relevant to my study. This data supplemented information not received from the two-tiered interview process.

### **Gaining Access**

When I arrived in Rio de Janeiro for my fieldwork, I focused on expanding my database of social entrepreneurs to ensure I had a comprehensive list. I also reached out to experts in the field of social entrepreneurship and violence prevention to critique the questions in my structured and semi-structured interview protocols. I utilized the social networks that I had developed in Rio over the last several years to realize these tasks, and also to ultimately gain access to my targeted population. I had kept in touch with key staff members from several NGOs who had agreed to help me augment my database and make contacts with the social entrepreneurs in the database. Furthermore, I utilized the Fulbright network in which I am embedded. Several fellow Fulbrighters were working with or for organizations that ultimately were included in my database.

I wanted to make contact with Ashoka, since they had the most comprehensive list of social entrepreneurs in their database that matched the parameters of my study and I hoped that they could help me make contact with their social entrepreneurial fellows. After calling several times only to be transferred to voicemail, I decided to visit the office in person in São Paulo. Armed with a box of chocolates, I knocked on the office door and asked if it would be possible to talk with someone about my research. As luck would have it, I met Paula <sup>11</sup> who promised to help me with my research project. Not only did Paula provide me a comprehensive list of all of their Fellows in Rio de Janeiro, but Paula also promised to send an email introducing me to the leaders who I wished to include in my study. In Brazil, it matters more who you know than what you know (Page, 1995). Paula's introductory email was invaluable in ultimately getting 13 leaders I did not know or have prior connections with to agree to participate in my study.

### **Pilot Study**

To ensure that the questions I included in my structured and semi-structured interview protocols would disclose findings relevant to my core research questions, I conducted a small pilot study with six leaders, which led to three revisions of my structured interview. This pilot study allowed me to examine the type of data generated from my research tools and informed me of modifications that needed to be made. I first tested the structured interview with a community leader I had met several years earlier.

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<sup>11</sup> I use the pseudonym Paula to ensure confidentiality.

The interview took a little over two hours to complete, demonstrating that it was too long and had too many open-ended questions. I tested the revised interview protocol with two leaders I met through personal contacts. While the new version was acceptable in length (roughly 30 minutes to complete), several of the revised questions were difficult for leaders to answer. I reframed these questions and utilized Survey Monkey, a Web-based survey program, to format the latest iteration of my structured interview. Survey Monkey proved to be an excellent tool for formatting the interview protocol and organizing data (to be discussed in the analysis section). After testing the revised structured interview protocols with two leaders, who I had found out about from the leaders in the prior two rounds of the pilot study, I made some minor revisions and was satisfied with the questions.

Three of the leaders who filled out the pilot interview were kind enough to help me test my semi-structured life history interview. While the semi-structured interview protocol entailed fewer revisions than the structured one, I learned a valuable lesson that substantially changed my research plan. I had originally intended to gather structured interview data from all social entrepreneurs who met the parameters of my study, and conduct a life history interview with only a small sample of those selected, based on patterns that emerged from the structured interview data. If, for example, it seemed that there was a distinct pattern among male and female social entrepreneurs, then I had planned on selecting case study participants to reflect this pattern. In doing so, I could further delve into how they learned and what social capital might have played a role in how they learned differently or similarly. However, I learned quickly through the pilot study that it would be difficult at best and very unlikely to schedule a follow-up meeting

with these incredibly busy leaders. Accordingly, I decided to conduct the two-tiered structured interview and the semi-structured personal life history interview during the same meeting with all of the case studies. I would conduct a follow-up interview with whichever leader was available and willing to meet a second time.

### **Structured Interviews**

I conducted a face-to-face structured interview with 27 participants that fell within the parameters of my selection guidelines outlined in the *Participant Selection* section. I attempted to be as consistent as possible in the way that I conducted the structured interview to enhance reliability (Fowler, 2001). The interview was administered in person, except in three instances. Two of the leaders were traveling and could not meet in person, so the interviews were done over the phone. Prior to the phone meeting, I emailed them a copy of the interview protocol so that we both had a copy in hand when it came to filling it out. In both cases, I filled in the responses and tape-recorded the conversation so that I could confirm accuracy. In the third instance, the leader filled out the interview questions on-line through Survey Monkey. For all three exceptions I spoke with the leaders beforehand and introduced the structured interview to them the same way I did with all of the other leaders in an effort to be as consistent as possible in administration. I assured them that if they had any questions, they could contact me at any point.

The purpose of the structured interview was to: a) gather data on the various experiences and ways that participants learned to take on the role of social entrepreneur b) to gather data on the social capital that the sample population relied on to learn and c)

to gather demographic data on the leaders and their social entrepreneurial enterprises. The results of the structured interview helped guide my questions for the life history interview by revealing trends and patterns about learning experiences and the networks in which they were embedded.

More specifically, the first part of the structured interview included demographic questions on the leaders' initiatives, such as the main objective of the social enterprises and the number of people in the target population that directly benefited from the social enterprises since their inception. The next section focused on the breadth of experiences and social capital that contributed to learning about being a social entrepreneur. These were subdivided into experiences and social capital that contributed to learning about the social problem that the initiative attempted to address, including a number of questions about the leaders' interactions with the target population prior to beginning the initiatives. The second set of questions focused on experiences and social capital that contributed to the conceptualization of the social enterprise. The third set of questions offered insight into the technical capacities necessary to instigate an innovative initiative. The next section asked about resources that the leaders utilized to learn about information relevant to social entrepreneurship. The final section focused on demographic information about the leaders, which can be found in Appendix E.

The main research questions of my study necessitated that I investigate the social capital that contributed to learning about being a social entrepreneur and the interplay of this capital with how they learned to take on the role of a social entrepreneur. The structured interview data afforded me an initial look at the actors' linkages in their support networks and provided me some indication of the roles these networks (and the

social capital embedded within them) played for the social entrepreneurs. I then complemented this information with data gathered during the semi-structured life history interviews, which allowed me to take a more in-depth look at the interplay of the social capital they relied on to learn and their capacity to take on the role of a social entrepreneur.

### **Life History Interviews with the Social Entrepreneurs**

After completing the face-to-face structured interview, I conducted a semi-structured life history interview with each of the social entrepreneurs, which was one of my primary sources of data. A life history interview is defined by Watson and Watson-Franke (1985) as “any retrospective account by the individual of his [or her] life in whole or part, in written or oral form, that has been elicited or prompted by another person” (p. 2). One of the advantages of conducting a life history interview was that it facilitated my understanding of how one event or factor in a research participant’s life might have led to other events or factors that were relevant to the entrepreneurial learning process. In addition to offering insights into the sequential order of events, it also allowed me to understand how a factor or event fit into the context of the larger learning process (Elliott, 2005).

By interviewing the participants in the case studies, I collected data that shed light on the factors, events and relationships that the social entrepreneurs viewed as playing a role in learning the skills and knowledge of social entrepreneurs. Questions touched on prior experiences and social capital that they felt played a pivotal role in their social entrepreneurial learning trajectories. Open-ended questions, such as my opening



question, “Tell me what was going on in your life when you came up with the idea of your social entrepreneurial initiative,” were intermixed with more focused and less open-ended questions. For example, I had a number of questions that asked for more details regarding answers from the structured interview. I relied partly on my semi-structured interview protocol and partly on topics that came up during conversation or were based on additional data collection. While I followed the interview protocol as closely as possible to ensure consistency in data collection across case studies (Fowler, 2003), I allowed for flexibility when interviewees brought up topics relevant to their personal histories that had not been included in my interview protocol. In order for the participants to feel as comfortable as possible in relaying their stories, I also was flexible when research participants touched upon questions that appeared later in my series of questions. To view the interview questions, see Appendix B.

### **Follow-up Interviews with the Social Entrepreneurs**

If I had unanswered questions from the life history interviews, I conducted a follow-up interview with leaders who had the time to meet again. Doing the second interview provided me with a way to clarify responses and ask additional questions that arose from the first interview. The interviews with the social entrepreneurs were a crucial component of the data collection, providing depth to their perspectives on how they learned and the significance of their networks. A total of 18 follow-up interviews were conducted.

### **Interviews with Key Informants**

For each of the case studies, I also interviewed key informants who were able to add insight into the core research questions. This included actors who helped conceptualize and implement the leaders' initiatives and members of the target population of the leaders (in some instances, the actors who helped conceptualize and implement the leaders' initiatives were also considered the target population). Interviewing them allowed me to triangulate the data from the interviews with the social entrepreneurs.

### **Interview Data Across Research Participants**

With the permission of each research participant, I tape recorded the interviews. Interviews with social entrepreneurs lasted from one to three hours. For interviews with additional key informants, I asked clarifying questions specific to the social entrepreneurs they knew; these lasted from one to one and a half hours. In order for the participants to feel as comfortable as possible, I allowed them to choose when, where, and how long interview sessions occurred. All interviews were transcribed verbatim.

In total, I conducted personal life history interviews with each of the social entrepreneurs in my study (27), 18 follow-up interviews, and 25 interviews with key informants. I triangulated the life history interviews with interviews conducted with other core informants, and I triangulated participant observation data, with the interview responses of the entrepreneurs, as well as Web site and archival data.

### **Participant Observation**

Although limited by time, I partook in participant observation whenever possible. Participant observation occurred in a myriad of settings, including but not limited to: meetings and weekend retreats with the leaders and key stakeholders within their initiatives; on the streets with leaders who worked with street children; a variety of cultural events with leaders involved in culturally-oriented social initiatives; street marches advocating for equal rights of all citizens; a prison where one leader volunteered, conferences involving numerous non-profit organizations which the leaders in my study actively participated in; government offices; a book-launching event; and educational programs in a number of *favelas*. Generally, when participant observation involved the leader and the target population, I participated in the activities in which the leaders were involved. During meetings, conferences and other business-oriented activities, I typically observed in the background, unnoticed by most people. Whenever possible, I wrote notes as I was partaking in participant observation; when impossible, I immediately typed up notes as soon as I got home so as not to forget important details.

### **Analysis**

Consistent with qualitative research, I began analysis from the onset of data collection and continued until the completion of the write-up of my findings (Maxwell, 2005). In doing analysis from the beginning, I was able to adjust my research strategies

and specific questions as relevant data emerged. Below I will describe how I analyzed my qualitative data.

### **Structured Interview Analysis**

As a way of organizing the structured interview data, I used a survey Web site called Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey allows researchers to create surveys and interview protocols, as well as store data and assist with basic data analysis. Quantifiable data in Survey Monkey can be downloaded to an Excel spreadsheet, which was very useful for organizing my demographic data. Based on this information, I created a document that entailed an aggregated description of the social innovators in my study, and a document that described the social entrepreneurial initiatives that the leaders created. I also transferred other structured interview data to a spreadsheet, such as the number of individuals whom the leaders considered absolutely essential in conceptualizing the initiatives, and the number of leaders who had participated previously in volunteer work and social activism prior to beginning their social entrepreneurial initiatives. I calculated the average of these numbers, which helped me indicate patterns in experiences and social capital relevant to their social entrepreneurial learning trajectories. The structured interview data allowed me to get a comparative perspective of experiences, social capital and resources used to learn the skills and knowledge necessary for different phases of social innovation.

### **Semi-Structured Life History Interview and Other Qualitative Data Analysis**

The majority of data generated from the case study was based on semi-structured interviews with the entrepreneurs and the people who they referenced in their networks that contributed to the social entrepreneurial learning process. In order to organize and analyze the qualitative case study data after conducting an interview, I wrote extensive interview field notes and then summarized them in the form of a memo note. These notes ultimately proved to be very important for pulling out themes that emerged organically from the data. I transcribed verbatim all of the interviews, and carefully and repeatedly went over my interview transcripts. I took notes on themes and patterns that emerged inductively while reading this data (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). I cut and pasted statements that I thought directly spoke to my overarching research questions, as well as unexpected statements that grabbed my attention and came up repeatedly across interviews. I then organized these statements into an outline of themes (about 60 pages of notes) and wrote a memo on how the themes aligned with, and in some cases were different from, my original research questions (Maxwell, 2005). To affirm that my outline and memo accurately reflected my data, I revisited the interview transcripts. I then created a new outline, which grouped subthemes within larger umbrella themes. Doing so made it easier to further analyze topics relevant to my overarching questions. For each “umbrella theme” I wrote a brief summary of how the findings spoke to or were relevant to my literature review, and how they addressed my overarching research questions.

Based on the transcripts, I also created a visual story arc for each of the leaders. The narratives visually represented the social innovators’ descriptions of what they considered to be key learning experiences in their social entrepreneurial learning

trajectories. Similar to educational biographies, I paid attention to how one event built off of or was connected to prior events. I coded the skills and information that the leaders said they learned from these experiences, as well as the social capital that was embedded in and/or evolved out of these learning events.

Finally, I used MAXQDA, an electronic data management program well suited to qualitative data. I utilized the organizational capacities of MAXQDA by creating a coding system, which included codes that emerged from my literature review and the thematic analysis of the qualitative data, as well as new themes that evolved during this final cycle of reading my transcripts. I looked for recurring patterns in the types of experiences and social capital used among social innovators, as well as patterns in the process of learning. I also categorized responses from specific interview questions, which was useful when the same question was answered by a variety of research participants. I coded these interview questions so that I could aggregate answers from different participants in one document, in order to compare and contrast answers. Utilizing MAXQDA, which easily facilitates multiple matrices searches, made it easier for me to identify patterns.

I compared the codes that emerged after three rounds of analysis to check for consistency in the coding system. I found substantial overlap, suggesting reliability in my coding scheme. I also compared the findings from my structured interview data with the codes and memo notes that evolved out of my other qualitative data to ensure there was uniformity in findings. For example, in my structured interview data, leaders consistently marked that the target population was “very important” in terms of understanding the social problems that their initiatives were attempting to overcome. Across the life history

interviews, the leaders also described how interaction with the target population was a key factor in their learning trajectory as a social entrepreneur. The two sources of data highlighted for me the importance of the target population in the learning pathways of the leaders. The data aligned such that I felt confident about moving on to the next stage of analysis.

Once I had a sense of the major themes that emerged from my data, I organized and analyzed the more detailed information needed to support my dissertation findings and research arguments. In addition to filling in the spreadsheet that I had already begun about the demographic information on the leaders and their initiatives, I also created two new spreadsheets. One was dedicated to the target population of the leaders, and another was dedicated to the actors that the leaders described as critical in the conceptualization and implementation of their innovative enterprises. The spreadsheets entailed specific information related to these two groups of actors that was relevant to my overarching research arguments. For example, I had a column dedicated to how the leaders initially met each of the actors (to offer insight about how leaders access actors in their social networks) and the type of social tie they had with the actors when beginning their initiatives. This helped me process information and analyze patterns related to social entrepreneurial social capital.

### **Limitations**

There were numerous limitations of this study that I took into consideration throughout the entire research process. The first limitation was language. Although I speak fluent Portuguese, it is not my first language. In an effort to overcome this

limitation, I hired a part-time research assistant named Thiago da Cruz. I met Thiago in June of 2008 while doing pre-dissertation data collection. Thiago is a native *Carioca* from a neighborhood in the northern suburbs called *Bonsucesso*. Not only is he fluent in English, but he also was able to explain contextually-based phenomena that enhanced the quality of my data collection and analysis. For sections of interviews that were hard to understand or if I had concerns about how I translated the interviews while transcribing them, I asked him to check my interpretations for accuracy.

The second potential limitation was the time allocated for fieldwork. If I had had more time, I would have observed the social entrepreneurs over an extended period of time to get a better sense of how they learned. Making the most of my time during my nine months in Rio de Janeiro, I observed leaders, whenever feasible, in their day-to-day interactions as they engaged in social entrepreneurial processes (usually before or after an interview). For three of the leaders, I had the opportunity to spend extended periods of time with them during prior visits to Brazil, and I relied on participant observation notes that I had written during this time. I also ideally would have done a follow-up interview with all of the leaders for whom I had unanswered questions from the life history interviews. In instances when the leaders did not have time to meet for a second interview, I obtained necessary data through email correspondence with the leaders and/or from other sources including key informants and written materials. A related limitation due to time restrictions was the lack of data collected on the actors who made up the leaders' communities of innovation. I had not realized that these stakeholders would play such a pivotal role in my study and therefore did not use my limited time in the field to interview them. Had I had more time, I would have attempted to interview as



many actors within the communities of innovation as possible. Luckily, many of the key informants I interviewed happened to be actors within the leaders' communities of innovation.

A third limitation was that not all social entrepreneurs who fit my criteria agreed to participate in my study. My intention was for all 38 of the social entrepreneurs who met the parameters of my study to participate in the structured interview and semi-structured life history interview. In total, 27 social entrepreneurs participated in both the structured interview and the life history interview, while an additional leader participated in just the structured interview and an additional three leaders participated in just the life history interview. I decided to exclude from my study leaders who only participated in the structured interview or life history interview, because the information I collected was not sufficient to answer my overarching research questions. Seven others participated in either the structured interview and/or life history interview, but ultimately did not meet the parameters of my study. On a positive note, one of these interviews highlighted the ill-effects of working in a community of innovation that lacked social capital. The innovative initiative that the actors within the community of innovation set out to implement fell apart when they discovered that the leader of their group was using group funds for personal use. The lack of trust ultimately incapacitated the group, whose members no longer felt able to work as a collective unit.

A fourth limitation was that the interview data produced self-reported information. What got reported was what people perceived to be significant, such as what they perceived to be important experiences in the learning process and not necessarily what actually happened. Also, people frequently forget important details of how they

learn or the networks in which they participate. I attempted to overcome this limitation by triangulating the information given by the entrepreneurs with additional reliable informants who were able to shed light on how they learned.

Because my study included qualitative methods, it is necessary to be aware of my social location within the context of the study. Differences in background affected how I “took in” information at the research setting, as well as how I interpreted and analyzed the data. While my intention was to understand and represent accurately the perspective of the participants, it was impossible to fully understand the experiences or perspectives of the participants. Although I wanted to incorporate the participants’ voices as much as possible into the dissertation, it is important to be mindful of how our different backgrounds may limit accuracy of interpretation and representation of their perspectives. Of the leaders with whom I had a follow-up interview, I discussed the data I had obtained from the previous interview to confirm that the participants felt I accurately described their narratives.

There is one last point I wish to make about my social positionality within the context of my research. I was introduced to 13 of the participants through an Ashoka connection. Since these leaders had previously received funding from Ashoka, I was concerned that the participants might feel obligated to speak positively about the social capital embedded in their relationships with this organization. To minimize this risk, I emphasized at the beginning of our encounter that I was an independent researcher and not affiliated with Ashoka. I also reaffirmed that their names would not be reported in the write-up of my study to ensure confidentiality.

The final limitation has to do with the wording of some of my closed-ended structured interview questions. For example, toward the end of my data collection, one of the research participants explained to me that while his social entrepreneurial initiative was legally considered a non-governmental organization (one of the options to the question, “How would you describe your social entrepreneurial organization?”), he preferred to describe it as an *Organização da Sociedade Civil de Interesse Público* (OSCIP) (Public Interest Civil Society Organization). I questioned how many leaders felt the same way about their initiative and wished I had included it in the list of potential responses. Luckily, I included “Other” as an option followed by “Explain.” Leaders who preferred OSCIP had the opportunity to write this in the “Other” option.

A question that was difficult to analyze due to wording was, “In total, how many years (collectively) did you directly interact with the target population prior to beginning your organization? (Direct interaction includes face-to-face talking, talking on the phone or mail correspondence).” The leaders referred to the number of years they interacted with the individuals that were considered the target population of their social entrepreneurial initiatives. However, through the life history interviews, I realized that in many cases the leaders interacted with other individuals, who they also considered to be part of the target population and who informed their work as a social entrepreneur. Consequently, in several cases, the leaders underreported on the structured interview the number of years of interaction with the target population prior to beginning their social entrepreneurial enterprises. To address this concern, I have written a footnote in chapter VI, where I wrote about the findings of this structured interview question.

On a positive note, the interview protocols that I relied on were extensive, allowing me to get a solid sense of the types of experiences and social capital that the social entrepreneurs relied on while learning to take on their roles. Chapters V and VI present the data that I gathered using the methodological approaches described in this chapter. Prior to the data findings chapters, however, it is necessary to understand the social and historical context in which the leaders in my study were embedded, since my research is based on the assumption that such social factors matter. Accordingly, I review in the following chapter the Brazilian and Rio context in which these leaders were situated.

## Chapter IV

### THE BRAZILIAN CONTEXT

#### Introduction

This chapter presents background information on Brazil in order to provide a social context in which the leaders in the study are situated. The purpose of the chapter is twofold. First, an historical overview will add clarity to the evolution of the social problems that the leaders in my study are attempting to overcome. Second, the chapter will provide a sense of the political and economic state of affairs during the leaders' formative years, including an era of unprecedented civil engagement from the 1980s until today. The chapter describes the conditions that fostered Brazil's burgeoning non-profit phenomena in the 1990s, with specific attention to the social realities in Rio de Janeiro. The purpose is to situate the initiatives that the leaders in my study founded within the larger third-sector world in Rio de Janeiro.

#### Overview of Brazil

Brazil is a country of extreme contradictions. It is considered the seventh richest country in the world in terms of GDP (International Monetary Fund, 2010) and is predicted to be the next global economic super power (CBS News, 2010). At the same time, it is considered the twelfth most unequal country in the world in terms of wealth distribution and the third most unequal country in South America after Colombia and

Bolivia [CIA, 2009].<sup>12</sup> The top 10% of its population earned 43% of the national income and the poorest 20% earn 3.3% percent (World Bank, 2010). Many experts believe that this extreme inequality is the underlying culprit of a slew of social problems, some of which the leaders in my study are attempting to overcome. Among others, they include poverty, high rates of violence, and an alarmingly large population of street children (Schmitt, 2007). While Brazil has experienced marked improvement in poverty reduction (The Economist, 2010), how is it possible that a country so rich in resources has an estimated 7,000,000 children living on the streets (Dimenstein, 1991) and that roughly half of the country's 60 million children were living below the poverty line at the turn of the millennium (Rizzini et al., 1998)? Why is it that young urban males between the ages of 18-24 die from homicide more than any other cause (COAV, 2009)? To understand the country's current social realities, it is necessary to delve into its past.

### **Brazil's Colonial Roots**

Brazil's current economic and social disparities are the consequences of a long history of social processes, structures and institutions. The Portuguese in 1500 set foot on what today is known as Brazil and constructed a slave-based society that relied on a feudal economy and had an Absolutist State. In order to lure Portuguese settlers to Brazil, the Monarchy promised settlers of noble descent large pieces of land, which set the stage for a concentration of land ownership amongst a small number of people. Today, Brazil has one of the most extreme concentrations of land ownership in the world (Dimenstein,

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<sup>12</sup> In 2009, Brazil had a Gini coefficient of .54 (CIA, 2009). The Gini coefficient is a number between 0 and 1 that represents the distribution of wealth with a country. "0" signifies perfect equality while "1" signifies absolute inequality (Scherer, Pollak, Otte & Gangl, 2007).

1991). In response to this uneven distribution, Brazil has one of the largest social movements for land reform (Girardet, 2007).

During Brazil's imperial era- the early 1800s to 1889-, the economy was based primarily on the export of labor-intensive products that relied heavily on an indigenous and imported African slave population. Between 1600 and 1850, it is estimated that 4.5 million Africans were enslaved and sent to Brazil, which was more than the total number of Africans sent to the Caribbean and North America combined (Horne 2007).

When Brazil became a Republic in 1889, slavery had only been abolished the year before and Brazil was the last country in the Western world to make slavery illegal. This late abolition of slavery, the country's land-ownership protocol, and an economy heavily dependent on export products that required human labor put in place a dynamic between the "haves" and the "have nots." As Brazil transitioned from colonization to independence, new social processes, structures and institutions evolved that fed into the inequalities already established during its colonial years. For example, government policies aimed to dilute the strength of the African and Afro-Brazilian majority by subsidizing the pay of European immigrants instead of paying newly freed slaves in an effort to hinder their economic integration (Skidmore, 1993). Images that portrayed Brazilians of Afro-descent as lazy and inept helped justify the hiring practices of farm owners and industrialists (Reid Andrews, 1991). Some experts argue that such institutionalized racist policies continue to have a residual effect on racial relations and power dynamics in Brazil today (Telles, 2003). For example, in recent times not only is there underrepresentation of Afro-Brazilian workers in white collar positions, but also disparities in income between Afro-Brazilians and whites increases among jobs that

require higher educational credentials (Reid Andrews, 1991). Stated differently, the more education that an Afro-Brazilian obtains, the salary gap widens in the job market when compared to the earnings of their white counterparts. Reid Andrews (1991) argues that this phenomenon is due to “white prejudice based on negative racial stereotypes” (p. 236) and is a legacy of slavery.

### **Brazilian History From 1964 to 1985**

From the birth of the Republic in 1889 until 1985, Brazil experienced short bouts of democratic governments interspersed with much longer periods of dictatorships and other oppressive forms of government. After a brief mid-century stretch of democracy, Brazil’s publicly elected president, João Goulart was overthrown by a military coup d’etat in 1964, which marked the beginning of a 21-year military regime. Those in command came from elite backgrounds and hewed to conservative politics that benefited the privileged class. Citizens against the military government were forced into exile. Those who stayed faced censorship and lived in fear of the brutal tactics used by the government to silence resistance. Censorship was most effectively enforced by government-sponsored political assassinations. A total of 339 cases have been officially documented, but many more civilians were questioned, tortured and imprisoned (Folha de São Paulo, 2007). The oppressive government set the stage for a culture that did not acknowledge the basic human rights of its citizens and exacerbated a culture that already placed higher value on certain lives, such as white versus Brazilians of African descent and upper versus lower class citizens (Perlman, 2010).



## **Urbanization During the Military Regime**

Brazil experienced dramatic economic growth and an improved infrastructure in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Known as the Brazilian “economic miracle,” the country enjoyed annual GDP growth rates averaging 11% or higher (Encyclopedia of the Americas, 2012). However, these changes intensified already existing economic inequalities and social exclusion. Brazil experienced a mass migration of rural populations to cities when the military government embraced an industrialization program in an effort to end its dependence on imported manufactured products (Dimenstein, 1991). As part of the military regime’s plan to become a capitalist urban-industrial country, the government wanted people to move to urban areas because it was easier to control them, and also because it provided the low-wage labor necessary to feed industrialization. While many moved to metropolitan areas in the Southeast in search of work and food during severe droughts in the Northeast, many others were forced to leave by land owners or cattle ranchers who received government land subsidies. While Brazil’s urban problems often have been chalked up to poor city planning, some city planning experts argue that the periphery model was carefully designed as “a strategy of maximum capitalist accumulation” (Dimenstein, 1991; Perlman, 2010). Upon resettling to urban areas, migrants were relocated to peripheral areas and responsible for sorting out their housing and communities with little investment from the public or private sectors. Case in point, throughout the military regime, 92% of the National Housing Bank’s loans went to middle and upper-class housing, even though the purpose of the institution was to address low-income housing (Dimenstein, 1991). Today 87% of Brazil’s population lives in urban areas (CIA, 2011). The majority is concentrated in peripheral areas (Perlman,

2010). Because a larger percentage of Brazilians living in poverty self-identified as black or *Pardo* (mixed-race) (IBGE, 2010), it is more likely that they live in peripheral areas where housing is more affordable, including *favelas*. Many of the target populations of the initiatives in my study were focused on empowering Brazilians of African descent.

The military regime policies and practices reinforced socioeconomic inequalities so that the country's elite benefited from the country's riches and the lower classes were deprived of public services. For example, city services and resources in the periphery of Brazil's urban areas were significantly reduced at best and non-existent in many places. Government resources were instead channeled toward more affluent neighborhoods (Perlman, 2010). Cultural and social outlets were virtually absent in poor urban areas, and typically the only social outlets for residents of peripheral neighborhoods were connected with the Church.

### **Civil Resistance**

Despite the very real danger of acting against the military government, an unprecedented union of diverse social movements began in the 1970s in opposition to the military regime (Hochstetler, 2000). It involved Brazilian and international participants from a wide scope of sectors including urban activists (*favela* activists), the Catholic Church,<sup>13</sup> human rights lawyers, Afro-Brazilian activists, artists, intellectuals and others.

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<sup>13</sup> The Catholic Church was not unified in its actions during this time. Some actors within the Catholic Church were quite radical, while others were more conservative and supported the military government. On the progressive end of the spectrum, the Catholic Church in Brazil had bragging rights to the most extensive network of CEBs (Ecclesiastical Based Communities) within the larger network throughout Latin America. Inspired by liberation theology, CEBs were religious-based groups that worked on social and political injustices at the local level. Because the Catholic Church was one of the only institutions that remained independent of the military regime, it played a critical role in supporting grassroots efforts of actors in other institution such as labor unions and university activists that were dedicated to fighting for

The unification of cross-sector coalitions allowed activists that were most vulnerable to military repression (such as students and labor members) to mobilize with other activists on less contentious issues, such as indigenous rights. The ultimate result was to unite masses, which perhaps would not usually intersect, to work on a mutual agenda towards the democratization of Brazil. Many of the leaders in my study referred to these social movements as key in their formation and learning trajectory as social entrepreneurs.

In the 1970s, Brazil's economic boom shifted to a prolonged economic recession. Social movements that evolved out of the precarious economic and political conditions of Brazil ultimately led to the formation of one of the most influential left-wing political parties called the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT), or the Worker's Party (Viera, 2003). The Party's roots are grounded in a labor union movement. By the late 1970s, Brazil's recession had a significant impact on factory workers, who experienced pay freezes during times of high inflation. Factory workers went on strike within the factories and protested on the streets about their current work conditions and salary freezes. The union members' agenda expanded to encompass not only workers' rights, but also an overall better quality of life for those most affected by social exclusion. This broader agenda meant a wider network of participants joined the movement. Since repressive tactics were not working in suppressing oppositional movements, the government opened up its political arena in an effort to appease the public by allowing a new political party to be formed. This ultimately led the trade unionists to transition from fighting for labor rights to forming a political party. Unlike traditional political parties, the PT was not interested

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social justice.

in seeking power for its own sake, but instead with acting as the voice of the powerless (Trevas, et al., 1999). Its focus was to move Brazil toward a democracy and to enhance the political participation of the people. The philosophy and driving principals of the Party were strongly influenced by a Freirian framework and grounded in Marxism. At least eight of the leaders in my study referred to their involvement in the PT as a pivotal component of their social entrepreneur trajectory.

The oppositional social movements from the 1970s and 1980s relied on a number of tactics, including massive street demonstrations and protests. The tipping point of this particular strategy was the campaign *Diretas já* (Direct [elections] now), in which millions of people went to the streets demanding direct public elections of the 1985 president. While the campaign failed in that Brazil held its last indirect elections in 1984, President Tancredo Neves of the Democratic Alliance won with promises of entering a new democratic era, starting with the creation of a new Constitution. Neves died days after being sworn in and was replaced by José Sarney. Regardless of the unexpected change in presidency, Brazil's democratic structure held.

### **The Democratization of Brazil, 1985 to Present**

In 1985, Brazil showed signs of embracing a political democracy. The country engaged in a long process of constitutional development and deliberation, which relied substantially on the participation of the civic sector in its creation. The Constituent Assembly was set up to hammer out the specifics of the new Constitution (Hochstetler, 2000). For two years, actors from cross-sector social movements, including many of the leaders in my study, worked together throughout the country in an effort to make sure

their concerns were heard during the debates within the Constituent Assembly and ultimately incorporated into the new piece of legislation. After many debates on the local, state and national level and within the Constituent Assembly, in 1988 Brazil's new democratic Constitution was promulgated as the law of the land.

During the second half of the 1980s, there were signs of an expanding political democracy. Councils on all government levels were set up in which participants from the civil sector could work together with public sector officials (Hochstetler, 2000). The purpose was to encourage participation of civic society in order to represent the voice of the "people." Many of the leaders in my study participated on these councils.

Another sign of an expanding democracy was Brazil's new era of social movements that attempted to address the country's daunting social issues. The actors within these movements, which included many of the leaders in my study, utilized newly created political processes and spaces to advocate for their specific social issue. For example, activists in social movements, university researchers and NGO leaders began collaborating on efforts to improve children's policies and programs. As part of this process, there were debates about the role of the new Federal Constitution, which for the first time in Brazil's history included an article dedicated to the rights of children. For two years the article experienced a handful of revisions based on numerous discussions and debates that took place in public and private spaces. At least ten of the leaders in my study played a role in these debates. The ultimate result was the Statute on the Child and Adolescent. Informed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the purpose of the Statute was to codify a set of basic rights for children and to also legally obligate the Brazilian government to provide the necessary support for the healthy development of all

children (Rizzini et al., 1998). Put into law in 1990, the Statute was praised worldwide as being, at least on paper, one of the most advanced pieces of democratic legislation in regards to the protection of children. Advocates of youth and children, including a number of the leaders in my study, continued to engage in political spaces and processes, such as federal, state and municipal “Councils for Children’s and Adolescents’ Rights.” These Councils were set up by the government to ensure that the public had a say in policy decisions related to youth (Consortium for Street Children, 2010).

### **Brazil Today**

While Brazil became a political democracy in 1988, it has failed to effectively translate democracy into the social, economic and cultural realms. For example, while the Statute on the Child and Adolescent is considered a masterpiece of democratic legislation, in practice the law has not translated to protecting the rights and encouraging healthy development of all children. Judges and police officers have continued to treat children in ways that resemble practices under the military regime. For example, based on interviews with street children, Dimenstein (1991) describes numerous accounts of police beatings and unnecessary police shootings. One street child explained, “You can be sitting there, minding your own business and they [the police] come and start kicking you, beating you up, just because you’re on the street” (Dimenstein, 1991, p. 36).

Another describes, “I sleep in the shopping center. Every night, at about midnight the police come and pick us up, take us inside, hit us, and make us eat cockroaches and hit us on the head with clubs” (Dimenstein, 1991, p.35). Also, the public in general still view marginalized children, such as those from the *favelas* or street children, as delinquents

and advocate for strong punishments against delinquent youth, even if it means violating their human rights as outlined in the new Statute. The legislative bill, which obligates the state to provide necessary support for healthy development of all children, including educational opportunities and support for positive community development efforts, has played out in imbalanced ways throughout the country. Children and adolescents in poor urban areas, for example, suffer from unequal educational opportunities and live in communities lacking the basic infrastructure necessary for healthy development (Rizzini et al., 1998; Perlman, 2010).

Brazil's ineffectiveness in translating its political democracy into the social, economic and cultural arena has resulted in a disjunctive democracy. Its laws promise individual liberty, autonomy and security, but in reality the civil component of citizenship is compromised, systematically excluding vulnerable groups of people (Caldeira & Holston, 1999). Such exclusion manifests into a series of social problems such as high levels of inequality, poverty, and violence. For example, despite having one of the most robust economies in the world, in the late 1990s the top 10% of Brazil's population earned slightly less than 50% of the national income and the poorest 20% earned about 2.5% (Peet & Hartwick, 1999). Experts purport that one outcome of Brazil's extreme inequality is high rates of poverty. Despite its immense natural wealth, in the 1990s just under half (47%) of the country's 160 million inhabitants lived in poverty (IBGE, 1997). Brazil's chronic poverty has had a marked impact on the lives of youth. In 1990, 53% of Brazil's children and adolescents were living with families whose monthly income was less than half of one minimum salary, and 60% of children growing up in single parent households were living below the poverty line. Considering that almost half of Brazil's

population at the time was under the age of 20 and the fact that such a significant portion of this group lived in poverty, this presented daunting challenges for the State to adequately address the developmental needs of all children as outlined in the Statute (Rizzini et al., 1998). Formal education is a prime example. The average number of years completed in formal schooling in 2000 in Brazil was 5.6 years (IGBE, 2007). In addition to a lack of educational resources and infrastructure, many youth in peripheral areas dropped out of school because they had to work to support their families. 50% of 15-17 year olds and 23% of 10-14 year olds were working (Household survey, IGBE, 1990). Lack of education limited future job opportunities for these youth, which reproduced high rates of poverty. Paes de Barros (2000) deduced that two-thirds of the wage inequalities in Brazil could be attributed to the country's unequal distribution of educational attainment.

Brazil has had a long history of unequal access to formal education, and there are a number of factors that have contributed to this imbalance. First, the country traditionally has had a decentralized education system with radical discrepancies in funding, curricula, quality of education and educational outcomes across schools (Marcilio, 2001). Disjointed educational reforms throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries only exacerbated the decentralized system, leading to administrative confusion, failure of accountability and inconsistency in the preparation of teachers. Additionally, until 1996, the education system has had substantial discrepancies in spending per student at the primary and secondary level, not only across different regions in Brazil, but also across schools within the same region and even within the same cities (The World Bank,



2010b). This has resulted in different levels of per-student resources and quality of education.

Since President Cardoso's administration in the 1990s, federally-sponsored educational policies have attempted to address the aforementioned issues through a multitude of progressive social programs and policies. In 1996 Brazil's government developed a comprehensive legal framework for basic education (*Lei e Diretrizes de Bases*) (The World Bank, 2010b). Further, in order to minimize discrepancies in what students were taught across schools, the federal government developed a national curriculum. To get a sense of what students actually learned, Cardoso's administration set the ball in motion to develop an information system to measure education results (The World Bank, 2010b).<sup>14</sup>

In terms of funding, the Cardoso administration employed a number of tactics in an effort to equalize finances across the education system. In 1998, a reform called *Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento do Ensino Fundamental* (FUNDEF) or The Basic Education Equalization Fund, was put into effect, guaranteeing a national minimum level of spending per student in primary education (The World Bank, 2010). Federal funding helped provide resources for states that could not afford the minimum spending mandate, and the federal government also required states to share resources across municipalities to assure that all state and municipal schools were able to achieve

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<sup>14</sup> A standardized biannual sample-based exam (SAEB) was put in place to measure the learning progress of students over time across Brazil. The assessment exam eventually was expanded in 2005 to test all 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and renamed *Prova Brasil*. The government also set up a system called IDEB (*Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica*), which aims to measure the quality of education across public schools in Brazil.

the per-student spending mandate. According to The World Bank (2010), “Overnight in 1998, FUNDEF redistributed R\$30.6 billion (25% of total primary education spending)....” (p. 15). The program ultimately was expanded to include pre-primary and secondary school and was renamed *Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica e de Valorização dos Profissionais da Educação* (FUNDEB) during the Lula administration.

In an effort to minimize financial obstacles that could impact the educational performance of low-income students, a cash subsidy pilot program called *Bolsa Escola* (School Bag) was put into effect. Families were given cash subsidies between US\$5 and US\$15 per child per month under the condition that all of the children in the household had a school attendance record of at least 85% (Barrientos & DeJong, 2006). In 2001 the *Bolsa Escola* became a federal program, ultimately reaching 8.2 million children from 5 million low-income households. *Bolsa Escola* was consolidated with other cash transfer programs in 2003 under the Lula administration and renamed *Bolsa Família*. Launched as the government’s flagship social program, its purpose was not only to reduce poverty and inequality, but also to break the inter-generational cycle of poverty by meeting certain conditions conducive to human development objectives such as ensuring that all children under the program had annual medical exams and remained in school. Since its inception, *Bolsa Família* has improved the living conditions of over 10 million of Brazil’s poorest families (World Bank, 2010b) and has “...become a highly praised model of effective social policy” according to former World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz (World Bank, 2005). The effects of *Bolsa Escola* and *Bolsa Família*, combined with policies that substantially raised the minimum wage and increased

pensions, have lifted millions of people out of poverty (The World Bank, 2010b; Newsweek, 2012).

Brazil's federal social programs and policies have had a positive and marked impact on educational outcomes. Brazil's average educational attainment of its labor force has improved faster than any other developing country over the last 15 years (The World Bank, 2010). In 2010 the average number of years of schooling was seven years, a giant leap from 3.8 years of schooling in 1990 (IGBE, 2007).<sup>15</sup> Researchers believe that the aforementioned progressive government programs and policies, and the increase in educational attainment in Brazil over the past 15 years, have played an important role in lowering income inequality (World Bank, 2010b). In 1998 the Gini coefficient<sup>16</sup> for Brazil was .59 (The World Bank, 2004); in 2008 it was estimated to be .45 (The World Bank, 2010). This is an impressive drop in such a short time, compared to other countries.

While social conditions in Brazil are looking up, there is much room for improvement. Despite having one of the most robust economies in the world, in 2010 Brazil ranked 73 out of 169 countries in terms of the Human Development Index (HDI)<sup>17</sup>, according to the UN (2010). Also, 44.7% of Brazil's children and adolescents in 2008 were living with families whose monthly income was less than half of one minimum

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<sup>15</sup> One of the reasons that the social programs have had such positive results in a relatively short period of time is the continuity in programs and policies from the Cardoso administration to Lula's administration.

<sup>16</sup> The Gini coefficient is a number between 0 and 1 that represents the distribution of wealth with a country. "0" signifies perfect equality while "1" signifies absolute inequality (Scherer, Pollak, Otte, & Gangl, 2007). In 2002, Brazil had a Gini coefficient of .61 (Highbeam Research, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> The Human Development Index is a way of measuring social and economic development by combining indicators of life expectancy, educational attainment, and income (United Nations, 2011).

salary (R\$415), and 18.5% were living with families whose monthly income was one-fourth of the minimum wage. Half of Brazil's families were surviving on a minimum-wage salary. Brazil is also still struggling with social issues that negatively impact child development, such as violence. Since Brazil shifted to a democratic state it has seen a marked rise in violent crime, specifically in urban areas. In 1980, for example, violent-related deaths were the fourth cause of death, but rose to become the second highest since 1989 (Caldeira & Holtson, 1999). In 2004, more than 36,000 people died from firearms alone (BBC, 2005) and there were over 40,000 intentional homicides in Brazil in 2008 (Human Rights Watch, 2010).

Police violence has reached exorbitant levels since Brazil embraced political democracy. In the state of Rio de Janeiro alone, for example, police killed over 560 civilians in the first six months of 2009, which averages three police killings a day (Human Rights Watch, 2010). A mountain of research by human rights groups and university researchers suggests that it is not uncommon for police officials to partake in corruption that further diminishes the notion of a safe and democratic state. Public opinion polls indicate that citizens support violent tactics utilized by the police, despite the blatant human rights abuses. With increased violence in public spaces and a lack of trust in the police, Brazilians live within a culture of fear. More than ever, citizens feel justified in taking security into their own hands, using violence to fight violence. From 1983 to 1994, there was a 580% increase in the annual number of guns purchased in urban areas (Caldeira & Holston, 1999). The population most vulnerable to violence in Brazil is low-income urban male residents of Afro-descent between the ages of 18 and 24

years old. They are eight times more likely to die from violence than non Afro-Brazilian poor youth (Children and Youth in Organized Armed Violence, 2009).

### **Rio de Janeiro**

Up until this point, I have presented a cursory historical overview of Brazil. My study focuses on social entrepreneurs dedicated to youth empowerment and violence prevention in the city of Rio de Janeiro. The next section continues the prior conversation, but specific to the social issues in Rio de Janeiro that the leaders in my study are attempting to address.

### **Inequality**

Brazil's economic inequality and disparity in quality of life is markedly evident in Rio de Janeiro. Rio's metropolitan area spans 450 square miles with more than eleven million inhabitants (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2007). Roughly six percent of Brazil's population lives in the greater Rio de Janeiro area. The City is divided into the *zona norte* (north zone), *zona oeste* (west zone) and *zona sul* (south zone). Over sixty-eight percent of the City's residents live in the *zona norte* and *zona oeste*, which is predominantly composed of working class, lower-class and impoverished neighborhoods (Cox, 2003).<sup>18</sup> Only one-tenth of Rio's residents live in affluent neighborhoods in the *zona sul* and have access to quality health care, schools, public recreational space, restaurants, and shopping zones.

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<sup>18</sup> Unlike in the United States, the suburbs of Rio generally refer to poor areas on the outskirts of the City that often lack adequate public services.

## **Favelas**

Interspersed throughout Rio are shantytowns, or *favelas*, which are mostly illegal squatter settlements occupied by Rio's lower-class.<sup>19</sup> These shantytowns—makeshift shacks constructed of bricks, garbage, and other discarded materials piled on top of each other—are built on the hillsides of Rio and easily identified. Many *favelas* have specific points of entry, delineating the boundaries of the settlement and making it possible to monitor who comes and goes. There also exist *favela* complexes in which one *favela* blends into another, and only locals can decipher the invisible boundaries that determine the boundary between the two (Arias, 2004). Some *favelas* are adjacent to rich areas in the *zona sul*, while others are next to working-class and lower-class neighborhoods in the *zona norte* and *zona oeste*. In the early 2000s roughly one in five *Cariocas*<sup>20</sup> lived in *favelas* and the number of *favelados*, those living in *favelas*, was growing at a faster rate than the population of the overall city (Penglase, 2005).

Built spontaneously without the City government's authorization, Rio's *favelas* traditionally have lacked access to adequate infrastructure and public services such as schools, health facilities, piped water, electricity, paved streets, sewers, sanitation services, public safety and recreational space (Pino, 1997). One source estimated that

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<sup>19</sup> Rio's first officially "acknowledged" *favelas* beginning in 1897 in the center of the City on the two hills of Santo Antonio and *Providência*. (Leeds & Leeds, 1978; Valla, 1986; Burgos, 1998), Roughly 20,000 soldiers had returned from a military battle in the northeast region of Brazil and were granted permission to temporarily settle on these *morros* (hills) since the government had not provided housing for them. They decided to call it *Morro de favela*. *Favela* was the name of a species of plant that had thrived at the site of victory where they had just fought in the Northeast (Neuwirth, 2004). Oliveira (1996) suggests that Rio's more peripheral *favelas* originally were *quilombros* (communities populated by runaway slaves), which grew in population with the abolition of slavery in 1888. In both cases, *favelas* were settled illegally by poor populations living in tight quarters.

<sup>20</sup> *Cariocas* refer to residents of Rio de Janeiro.

70% of *favela* residents are of African descent (Neuwirth, 2004). Perlman (2010) had more conservative estimates based on her work in 1969 and 2003; In both studies, 21% of a randomly sampled *favela* population identified themselves as “black,” 30% as “mixed-race,” and 49% as “white.” When broken down by geographic regions within Rio, significantly higher concentrations of Afro-Brazilians live in impoverished neighborhoods in the *zona norte* and *zona oeste*, compared to Rio’s richer and whiter neighborhoods in the *zona sul* (Almeida, 1997).<sup>21</sup> Residents who live in these marginalized areas often face segregation and social exclusion on a daily basis due to race, class, and prejudice based on where they live (Perlman, 2010).<sup>22</sup> Residents from poorer areas also tend to experience higher rates of school dropout, teenage pregnancy and health problems, including high infant mortality rates, low birth rates, childhood death, dengue, and tuberculosis (Viva Rio, 2008).

A massive increase in *favelas* ensued in the 1940s, when rapid industrialization encouraged poor northeastern migrants, recently-arrived immigrants and freed slaves to migrate to Rio in search of work (Pino, 1997). Throughout the rise and expansion of Rio’s *favelas*, the ambiguity of the residents’ legal status has been beneficial to authorities and residents (Fischer, 2008). For example, politicians allowed people to occupy these areas illegally as long as they paid a small amount of rent directly to politicians. This precarious situation, however, made it easy for informal systems of

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<sup>21</sup> According to the 2000 Census, 53% of Brazilians consider themselves white; 39% identify as *pardo*- a broad, generic mixed-race category; less than 1% declared themselves indigenous and Asian; and only 6% self-identified as black (Telles, 2004).

<sup>22</sup> Some argue that institutionalized racist policies that began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century continue to have a residual effect on racial relations and power dynamics in Brazil today (Telles, 2004).

control to develop in *favelas*, which over the years have evolved into corrupt systems that typically evoke violence as a method of residential control.

Alarm at the explosive growth of *favelas* during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and the government's concern with beautifying the city led to a government sponsored program called *Parque Proletario*, which destroyed the homes of *favela* dwellers in the *zona sul* and replaced them with parks and other visually appealing structures (Valladares, 2005; Perlman, 2010). *Favelados* were relocated to temporary housing sites on the northern and western outskirts of the city center. For most *favelados* the public housing they were promised never materialized and eventually they built their own impromptu housing on the cleared site.

Between the mid 1960s to the late 1980s, during the military dictatorship, the government attempted to eliminate the *favelas* by forcing residents out of the city center and relocating them to the *zona norte* and *zona oeste* (Perlman, 1976). From 1970 to 1973 alone the government demolished 62 *favelas*, evicting over 100,000 *favela* residents out of their homes (Perlman, 2010). This resulted in a segregated city, in which the poor live in *favelas* and the northern and western peripheral suburbs, while the minority of affluent residents live in select neighborhoods in the *zona sul*. When the military government ended in 1985, some policies grounded in democratic principles supported attempts to improve the quality of life in *favelas* (Valladares, 2005). Such efforts continued into the 1990s and a program called *Programa Favelas-Bairro* (Slum-Neighborhood Program) have attempted to upgrade the basic infrastructure of *favelas* by building parks, paving streets and assuring that the poorest *favelas* have access to clean water and electricity. Nevertheless, the complexities and multiplicities of social problems



continue to overshadow development efforts (United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2003). The majority of *favelas* in the 1990s were still considered illegal and not officially recognized by the City (Pino, 1997). The *Instituto de Planejamento* reported in 1991 that there were over 660 *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro, with 962,793 residents living in 239,678 shacks (Pino, 1997). Today there are over 1,000,000 *favela* residents (Perlman, 2010). Rio has the largest *favela* population among Brazilian cities and its *favela* population rate has grown at a rate two and a half times faster than the city's overall population. It is estimated that 19% of Rio's population lives in *favelas*. When *loteamentos*<sup>23</sup> and *conjuntos* are included in the statistics, the number jumps to 37% (Perlman, 2010). Lack of city services, poverty and violence are among some of the social ills in Rio's *favelas* that the social entrepreneurs in this study are attempting to address.

Young people living in *favelas* are subjected to regular symbolic violence. Symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1997) refers to an attack on a person's sense of self worth and value, which is perpetuated through structural violence. Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2003) conceptualizes violence on a continuum of structural violence, symbolic violence and physical violence. In viewing violence on a continuum she postulates that one can understand how violence occurs in the day to day lives among citizens, as well as through the interactions of citizens and the structures and institutions in which they live. Embracing Scheper-Hughes' (2003) continuum, physical violence is one of the many social issues faced by residents of poorer areas in general in Rio de Janeiro. In Rio de

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<sup>23</sup> *Loteamentos* are illegal or semi-legal subdivisions, while *conjuntos* are government-sponsored popular housing units. They resemble housing projects in the US.

Janeiro, the number of young people assassinated between the ages of 15 and 24 years old increased by 88.6% between 1993 and 2001 (Children and Youth in Organized Armed Violence, 2009). The next section will review some of the causes of these high rates of violence.

### **Contributing Factors to Violence in Rio de Janeiro**

#### **Drug Trade**

Violence due to “turf wars” among drug factions (particularly *Comando Vermelho*, *Amigos dos Amigos*, and *Terceiro Comando*) accounts for many of the armed homicides in Brazil’s *favelas* (Cano, 2006). Police control does not extend far into many of the *favelas*. Violence among drug factions didn’t escalate until the late 1970s when the majority of drug sales changed from marijuana to cocaine, a substance with abundantly greater profit potential (Dowdney, 2003). The development of competing drug factions, the *ADA commando* and the *Terceiro Commando* also contributed to the exponential increase in violence (Zalular, 1995). Drug factions became territorial in particular neighborhoods within the *favelas* and began to rely on heavily-armed soldiers to protect their areas. In the larger *favela* complexes, three drug factions occupy different neighborhoods and partake in deadly battles to protect their “turf.”

Drug factions constantly and intensively recruit new soldiers; the average drug soldier is a ten year old male and 80% of youth involved in trafficking do not live beyond twenty-two years old (Dowdney, 2003). For a child who lives in a *favela*, joining the drug trade is tempting for two main reasons: money and respect. It is estimated that approximately 40% of youth living in urban areas in Brazil are living in “difficult circumstances” due to excessive levels of poverty and violence (Klees, Rizzini &

Deweese, 2000). Unemployment rates run high among 15 to 18 year olds and finding a job is even harder for those who face class discrimination and racism (Children & Youth in Organized Armed violence, 2009). In 2000, most *favela* community members that had legal work in the blue collar and service sector earned a minimum wage of \$383.60 *reais* per month (US\$230.26) (Perlman, 2010), far less than might be earned from drug trafficking (R. Fernandez, personal communication, July 2, 2004).

As the drug factions control their areas with violence, the lives of youth from the *favelas* are surrounded by violence. According to Zaluvar (1995), the drug factions gained complete financial, political and social control of many *favelas* in the 1980s, partially by taking over community associations. They also gained spatial control over social events in the *favelas* by sponsoring dance parties on the weekends known as *charms*, *baile funk* and community parties. While *charms* tend to be relatively calm with an emphasis on dancing, *baile funks* often embrace a “warrior ethos” in which masculinity is equated with physical toughness (Zaluvar, 1995). Such events encourage a culture of violence. In many *favelas*, these dance events have become the central social event on the weekends.

The drug trade alone, however, does not sufficiently explain the higher rates of violence among youth living in *favelas*. Research suggests that only two to five percent of residents actively work for the drug trade (Zalular, 1995). The following sections highlight other factors that have contributed to the increase in violence in Rio’s most marginalized areas.

### **Increase in Firearms**

In recent years, firearms have killed more Brazilians than cancer, HIV Aids and traffic accidents (Viva Rio, 2008). In 2004, more the 36,000 people died from firearms (BBC, 2005). An estimated 17 million firearms exist in Brazil, 9 million of which are unregistered. Although there are over 100 million more inhabitants living in the U.S. than Brazil, there are 25% more gun deaths in Brazil (Rohter, 2005). Brazil has the second largest arms industry in the Western Hemisphere. In recent years gun sales have become a more lucrative business in some of Rio's *favelas* than drug sales (Zalular, 1995). Police officials have played a prevalent role in the sales of illegal arms in Brazil's urban areas. In the last decade, more than 50 gun control bills have come before Congress in an effort to control firearms, but most have failed to be passed (BBC, 2004). One exception was a bill passed in December of 2003, which tightened rules on gun permits, enforced strict penalties against owners of unregistered guns, and created a national firearms register. Grassroots efforts, including Viva Rio from Rio de Janeiro, played an integral role in advocating for such legislation (Hearn, 2005). In 2005, a national referendum asked Brazil's public, "Should the commercial sale of guns and ammunition to civilians be prohibited?" Initially the public was in favor of banning the sale of firearms, but ultimately voted "no." The shift has been credited to a media blitz by gun lobbyists, which played on the public's fear of crime and lack of trust in the police, as well as the fundamental right to protect oneself.

### **Police Brutality**

Police brutality, especially against poor urban youth, is another factor contributing to the high rates of violence in Brazil. In Rio de Janeiro, the police killed 900 people between January and August in 2003; 75% of the victims were from the *favelas* (Jeter, 2003). In Brazil's urban areas the number of citizens killed by police officers is higher than those injured, even though the number of police officers injured on duty has remained constant.<sup>24</sup> In particular, police brutality against marginalized youth has been well documented (Zaluar, 1995; Dowdney, 2003). For example, members of the police force killed 21 residents in one evening from the *Vigário Geral favela* (Neate & Platt, 2006). Two years later, in 1995, police shootings in Rio rose substantially when the government instigated a "bravery promotion" and "bravery pay bonus" policy (Human Rights Watch, 1997). Officers who partook in "acts of bravery" were eligible for pay raises. To qualify as an "act of bravery," according to the policy, an officer simply had to "prove" that he "tried" to arrest the suspect who either resisted arrest or instigated a confrontation. The implementation of the policy resulted in a nearly six-fold increase in the number of civilians killed by military police (Human Rights Watch 1997). The coroners' reports suggested that many of the cases were summary executions and not consequences of the exchange of bullets. Despite efforts to address the issue of extreme police violence, it continues to be a problem. In November 2010, security forces killed more than 40 people during an armed offensive against drug traffickers in the *favelas* of *Complexo de Alemão* and *Vila Cruzeiro* (Power, 2011).

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<sup>24</sup> In comparing police shootings in major US cities with Brazilian cities, the number of civilians injured is higher compared to those killed by the police in the US (Caldeira & Holston, 1999).

Impunity of the law promotes the continuation of police brutality because officers do not believe that there will be consequences for their actions. Chevingy (1995) analyzed police abuses in several cities in the Americas and concluded that there was a direct correlation between a decrease in police abuse when officers were held accountable for their actions through effective judicial systems and an increase in abuse when not held accountable. Such accountability has been hard to establish in Brazil. For example, in 1999 Rio created a judicial ombudsman of police to judge citizen complaints against police officers. In less than a year, 1,586 complaints (including torture) were reported, but only 112 officers were found guilty and not one officer remained in jail or was expelled (Human Rights Watch, 1997).

Caldeira and Holston (1999) argue that a lack of trust in the police and the judicial system contributes to a culture of fear among Brazilian citizens of all class backgrounds; in turn, this fear ultimately supports a culture of violence. Many citizens, who no longer trust the police or judiciary, resort to privatized security to overcome their sense of vulnerability. Upper-class Brazilians who can afford private security hire guards, who tend to be off-duty police officers, while the poor frequently fall victim to these private services. Fernandez (2004) suggests that citizens who suffer the most from the abuses of power create their own order through violence. In *favelas*, for instance, drug faction leaders take it upon themselves to maintain order in their communities through the use of violence.

## **Street Children**

While the previous discussion focused on causes of violence, I would like to shift gears to a specific group of youth who are highly vulnerable to violence: street children. The startling number of street children in Rio de Janeiro has caught the attention of national and international media over the last 20 years. The majority of street children began their lives in the *favelas* (Dimenstein, 1991) and the streets are simply a continuation of a life-long history of social exclusion. Research suggests that many work on the streets in order to help support their families. Of those living on the streets, many left home in order to escape physical and/or sexual abuse at home. Street children move from one space to another, attempting to escape violence and seeking opportunities for income generation or leisure. On the streets, not only do they face altercations with other street children, but they also fear getting beat up by the police or murdered by death squads. One of the most publicized cases of police violence occurred in 1993 when the police killed, execution style, eight street kids who were sleeping in front of Candelária Church in downtown Rio.

In the past, street children caught by the authorities were taken to FUNABEM (*Fundação Nacional do Bem-Estar do Menor*), the state institution for “delinquents.” Physical abuse was not uncommon within these institutionalized walls. For example, dos Santos (2001) describes how FUNABEM employees physically punished him regularly. Since the Statute of the Child, FUNABEM transitioned to a new government establishment, but according to at least three of the leaders in my study who work within government institutions focused on at-risk youth, abuse is still common. For a handful of

the leaders in my study their life work has revolved around Rio's street children population. I included them in my study because their work falls in line with my interest in leaders dedicated to violence prevention and the empowerment of Rio's most marginalized youth populations. A number of them had had experiences working within FUNABEM and they described these experiences as playing a formative role in their learning trajectories.

### **The Third Sector**

The civic sector did not sit back and idly watch these social problems unfold. Within Brazil's new political context, more institutionalized civic efforts emerged in an effort to address its most dire social problems. Civil society or non-profit organizations play a predominant role in this story. As mentioned in chapter II, today there are over 338,000 registered non-profit organizations in Brazil. Brazil's civil society organizations range in size, focus, structure and approaches (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística*, 2008). While some may be highly formalized, others resemble informal voluntary gatherings. Some span international borders, while others work strictly on a community-based level. The leaders in this study were chosen because they initiated a specific type of civic society organization, namely a social entrepreneurial initiative dedicated to violence prevention and/or the empowerment of youth living in marginalized spaces in Rio de Janeiro. Their initiatives aim to go beyond a deficit model of "fixing" the immediate problems of youth most affected by violence and social exclusion. Instead they aim to address the roots of the social problems: social processes and institutions that feed inequality, poverty, social exclusion and violence. How did the leaders of these



initiatives learn the skills and knowledge necessary to not only think of innovative ideas to address dire social issues, but also implement them? Many would argue that these leaders possessed certain characteristics conducive to social entrepreneurial leadership. While attributes such as hard work, creativity and charisma certainly were part of the equation, there are other factors that offer a more complex understanding of their social entrepreneurial paths. The following chapters describe findings from my study that offer a more nuanced story.

## Chapter V

### LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCES

#### Introduction

*“We learned this through the process [of doing] ..... We learned everything from day to day experience.”* (Social Entrepreneur, 2009)

This chapter focuses on the role that experiences play in the learning trajectories of social entrepreneurs and the interplay of these experiences in taking on the role of a social entrepreneur. The findings speak to a debate that has emerged within the field of social entrepreneurship, which questions whether social entrepreneurs are born with certain innate qualities conducive to social entrepreneurship, or if in fact leaders can learn the skills and knowledge necessary to take on this role. Social entrepreneurial research traditionally has applied an individualist lens aimed at understanding attributes favorable to social entrepreneurship, such as charisma, dedication and hard work (Bornstein, 1998; De Leeuw, 1999; Henton et al., 1997; Sullivan, Mort et al., 2003). The underlying assumption is that skills and knowledge necessary to be a social entrepreneur cannot be learned. Other experts in the field of social entrepreneurship challenge this notion and argue that social entrepreneurs can indeed learn information and other skills necessary to take on a social entrepreneurial role (Young, 1997; Catford, 1998; Zadek & Thake, 1997). Adhering to the latter argument, an exhaustive body of education literature suggests that adults learn through experiences and that prior experiences inform future ones (Dewey, 1938; Brookfield, 1986; Mezirow, 1991; Smith, 2001). My research

applies experiential learning within adult education literature to the social entrepreneurial context. The leaders in my study frequently referred to prior experiences when describing how they learned the skills and knowledge necessary to take on the role of a social entrepreneur, and this chapter describes the experiences that were most frequently mentioned during interviews as significant for learning to be an entrepreneur. I also examine the historical and socio-structural factors that shaped or influenced the leaders' access to these experiences.

Building on my argument that innate attributes do not tell the full story of how social entrepreneurs take on the role of an innovative leader and that leaders can learn the skills and knowledge conducive to social entrepreneurship, the chapter answers the following questions: What experiences do the leaders in the study have access to and rely upon to learn the necessary skills and knowledge to take on the role of a social entrepreneur? What is the interplay between these experiences and taking on the role of the social entrepreneur?

I set the stage by briefly revisiting the concepts of experiential learning in adult education and how these concepts intersect with the historically contextualized Brazilian socio-structural framework in which the leaders' social entrepreneurial learning trajectories occurred. I then describe my research findings, which reveal that a number of experiences played a crucial role in the learning trajectories of the leaders. They include: direct experience with income inequality, interaction over an extended period of time with those most negatively affected by certain social problems, volunteer work, experiences with religious institutions, activism, formal education, professional experience, reading, and international/intercultural experiences. The leaders described a

number of ways in which the aforementioned experiences informed them in taking on the role of a social entrepreneur. First, the culmination of experiences influenced their drive and desire to make a positive difference in society. The experiences also informed the leaders in terms of how they framed or understood certain social problems, which consequently influenced their conceptualization and implementation of innovative social initiatives. Equally as important, the findings reveal that the leaders' experiences built off of previous experiences in two ways. First, certain experiences changed the leaders' perspectives, which influenced future actions. Reflecting on experiences fostered cognitive connections between experiences, which enhanced the leaders' learning pathways. Second, an experience was typically a gateway to other experiences, leading to a sequence of experiences.

### **Conceptual Framework**

#### **Experiential Learning**

Much has been written on how experience is a critical component of learning (Kolb, 1983; Brookfield, 1986; Smith, 2001; Fenwick, 2003). Dewey, arguably the first prominent American scholar to bring to light the importance of experience in the learning process stated, "All genuine education comes about through experience" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 223). Since Dewey, a sizeable body of literature has been dedicated to understanding how adults learn from experience. In fact, an entire field dedicated to experiential learning has evolved in the last century (Andresen, Boud & Cohen, 1995). Experiential learning within the field of adult education is understood as direct participation in the events of life and a process of cognitive reflection on such events

through which the learner develops new insights (Houle, 1980). Since adults do much of their learning this way (Kolb, 1984; Brookfield, 1986; Smith, 2001; Fenwick, 2003), experiential learning theory can inform social entrepreneurship because it can offer insight into the process of how social entrepreneurs learn through experience.

### **Continuity and Reflection**

Two themes that are prevalent across experiential learning literature are continuity and reflection. Continuity refers to the importance of connecting previous, present, and past experiences in the experiential learning process. Dewey argued that not all experiences lead to learning; an experience is a learning experience only when the learner is able to connect previous, present and past experiences. Bateson (1995) explains that complex learning must take place over time through a variety of experiences, and that each experience potentially helps the learner understand a different aspect of a complex concept or phenomena. The individual, according to Bateson, relies on past experiences to shed light on new experiences, culminating in such a way that a concept that initially was confusing may end up as deeply meaningful after various learning experiences. According to Jarvis (1987), the sum of life experiences of the adult learner provides numerous reference points for exploration, new application and new learning. He argues that new experiences must be reflected upon to heighten the possibility that learning will take place and that if an individual is unchanged by an experience, then learning has not taken place. Finally, experts advocate that it is necessary to understand links between adult learning and earlier stages of learning in the lifespan. Such connections add insight into the formation of cognitive frames and interpretive filters, which inform learning in adulthood (Tuijnman & Van der Kamp, 1992; Brookfield, 1991). All of the

aforementioned authors describe in one form or another the importance of connecting previous, present, and past experiences in the experiential learning process.

One of the most effective ways to enhance adult learning is to strengthen the link between experience and reflection (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985; Brookfield, 1991). Boud et al. (1985) define reflection in the context of learning as, “a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciation (p. 19). Through reflection, a learner can evaluate his/her previous actions, which potentially leads to well thought out future actions (Mezirow, 1991). Adult education scholars postulate that reflection is such an integral aspect of experiential learning because it prepares the learner for new experiences by potentially helping the learner look at a situation from a different perspective or by clarifying an issue or problem. For example, David Kolb’s model of experiential learning (1984), which is one of the most cited models, entails a cyclical process of concrete experience, observation and reflection, the formation of abstract concepts and testing these concepts in new situations. Reflection plays an important role in the experiential learning process because it helps the learner take a more in-depth look at his/her experiences and think about how prior experiences can inform future situations. Reflection, therefore, promotes continuity because it helps bridge previous learning experiences with current and future ones (Jarvis, 1985).

### **Critical Reflection**

A more politicized form of reflection within adult education is called critical reflection, which intentionally challenges assumptions related to social power dynamics (Brookfield, 2008). Situated in resistance pedagogy and strongly influenced by critical

theory, the purpose of critical reflection is not just to think deeply about cultural and personal assumptions, but instead to understand social dynamics of power and ways to overcome hegemonic processes (Brookfield, 2005). While critical reflection is understood as a cognitive action, the ultimate purpose is aimed at social action for a more just society. Because social entrepreneurship encompasses innovative ideas aimed to address systemic problems that traditionally marginalize certain groups of people, critical reflection is an important concept.

### **Limitations of Experiential Learning and Sociology**

One of the biggest criticisms of experiential learning couched within the larger literature of adult education is that it traditionally has been framed almost exclusively as a cognitive process. Critics advocate that learning needs to be understood much more as a socially embedded and socially constructed phenomenon (Jarvis, 1987; Brookfield, 1995; Fenwick, 2003). My study is grounded in the assumption that while learning certainly has a cognitive component, it is a contextualized social process (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and it is important to understand the historical, cultural and social context in which learning takes place. Throughout the chapter, I apply a sociological lens to illuminate how micro and macro-level social factors facilitated and constrained the learning pathways of the leaders in my study. I explain how the historically contextualized socio-structural factors discussed in Chapter IV shaped the learning experiences that the social entrepreneurs had access to and the interplay of these experiences in taking on the role of a social entrepreneur.

A criticism of sociology is that sometimes too much emphasis can be placed on structural and institutional factors, disregarding the role that individuals play in shaping

their lives and the socio-structural conditions in which they are embedded. Social entrepreneurship is precisely about transforming structures and institutions that marginalize certain groups of people. I aim to strike a balance by making connections between the larger socio structural factors that shaped the lives of the leaders in my study. At the same time, I examine how the nuanced social dynamics and learning experiences of the leaders informed them in taking on the role of a social entrepreneur and their efforts to reshape traditionally oppressive structures and institutions.

In sum, I argue that experiential learning literature can inform the field of social entrepreneurship in a number of ways. In recent years researchers and educators in the field of social entrepreneurship have been interested in fostering future social entrepreneurs because they potentially can work on addressing some of society's most difficult social ills. Models of social entrepreneurship (described in Chapter II) describe initial stages, which entail both learning the skills and knowledge necessary to understand social problems and acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to begin thinking about solutions (Ashoka, 2012). However, the models do not detail how this learning process occurs. In an effort to fill this gap, I pull from experiential learning literature, which helps illuminate the process of how leaders learn from experiences by offering insight into a reflective process that potentially informs future action (Brookfield, 1991). The chapter will examine the interplay of the learning experiences of the social entrepreneurs in obtaining the skills, values, knowledge and desire to dedicate their lives to changing the societal structures in which they are embedded and that negatively shape the lives of some of Rio's most marginalized populations. Because learning does not occur in a socially isolated context, I consider historically-grounded social structures and



institutions that to some degree shaped the leaders' learning processes and their social entrepreneurial trajectory. Understanding the specific historical, cultural and structural context in which the leaders were situated can help scholars understand some of the social conditions that provided the scaffolding for Brazil to be a hotspot of social entrepreneurship.

## **Findings**

### **Direct Experience with Inequality**

I began the life history interviews with the leaders in my study by asking, "What was happening in your life when you thought of the idea for your initiative?" Inevitably the leaders would respond that in order to understand how they came up with the idea, it was necessary to go back a bit further in their history. One of the leaders began his story by describing what it was like to grow up in the periphery of Rio. He was considered well-off in his neighborhood because his family owned a television. His experience contrasted sharply with his relatives, who lived in the affluent southern part of the City and perceived his family as poor. This experience, he explained, "opened up my eyes to having a lack of opportunities or lack of access to information and unequal opportunities for the same population and I think this injustice was the primary motivator and had a major impact on what I would do for the rest of my life."

The leaders who came from more financially well-off backgrounds also described direct experiences with inequality. For example, one leader had a father from a middle class background from England and a Brazilian mother who grew up in extremely poor conditions. She said from a young age she observed the contrast- "the blatant

inequality”—in realities of her two parents’ families, and her awareness of this stark difference had a strong impact on what she wanted to do with the rest of her life. In the aforementioned scenarios, direct experience with inequality hit the leaders on an emotional level and made them question why such discrepancies existed. Fourteen leaders explicitly described similar emotionally-charged experiences with inequality. Brookfield (1995) argues that it is necessary to understand learning that took place during earlier stages prior to adulthood because it can add insight into the formation of prior conceptions. I agree that understanding the context of where learning occurred matters, and in this case, it is clear that the context of being exposed to economic inequality informed and shaped the leaders’ earlier conceptual thoughts.

Considering that Brazil is one of the most unequal countries in the world in terms of wealth distribution, it is not surprising that the leaders had a direct experience with inequality. The leaders lived in a city of extreme inequality, which to some degree shaped their experiences. Lots of Brazilians have direct experiences with inequality, but they do not attempt to do anything about it or head down a path of social entrepreneurship. It made me question what other experiences the leaders had that instigated a desire to learn more about inequality in order to try and change the status quo. Continuous interaction over an extended period of time with those most negatively affected by social inequality is part of the answer.

### **Interactions with Actors Most Negatively Affected by Social Problems**

The leaders in the study who identified themselves as part of the target population of their initiatives (16 of the 27) described how prior experiences in which they directly

felt the negative repercussions of social conditions such as poverty, inequality or social apartheid<sup>25</sup> played an important role in informing their work as a social entrepreneur. For example, one leader said, “I grew up in a very poor neighborhood and the truth is that I am my principle social project. I wanted to get out of there.... I had thought about various ways of how to get out of this poverty and misery.” Another leader, who grew up on the periphery of Rio, said that there was very little infrastructure in his neighborhood. He did not have access to quality health care or quality education and when he tried to get into a better school in a more affluent neighborhood, they rejected him. Because he and his friends were not well-prepared in terms of formal education for the job market, they had limited job opportunities, which further reinforced poverty in the area. He also said there were virtually no cultural events or outlets for leisure activities, such as a movie theater or park and he felt very isolated from the rest of the City. He explained that his personal experiences played a significant role in being a social entrepreneur today because if he did not grow up in a peripheral area similar to the target population of his initiative, then perhaps he would not be able to relate to them. He also explained that his current work as a leader was very much influenced by his personal experience of being socially isolated and not having the opportunity to meet people outside of his neighborhood and to exchange experiences. In response, he intentionally created a space where youth from different areas of Rio could come together.

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<sup>25</sup> Social apartheid is a term used to describe de facto segregation based on socio-economic status in which those living in poverty live in separated and unequal spaces from more affluent populations (Lowry, 2003). Social apartheid speaks to Rio’s spatial structure, which plays a significant role in shaping the experiences of its inhabitants.

Drawing from experiential learning, Jarvis (1985) states that experiences over a lifespan can serve as reference points of reflection and learning. 16 of the leaders grew up in socially isolated areas of the city, which shaped the kinds of opportunities they had during their formative years. They reflected on their social positionality during their childhood years during various stages throughout their lives, and referred to their personal experiences when engaging in social entrepreneurial work.

### **Volunteer Work**

It makes sense that those who were most negatively affected by a social problem such as poverty would care enough to try and change this social situation, but what about those who did not feel the brunt of such problems? Having direct contact and forming long-term relationships with those most negatively affected seemed like an important factor, and many times this initial contact happened through volunteer work.

All but two of the participants in the study indicated that they had engaged in volunteer work at some point in their lives, and a handful of leaders referred to this experience as the starting point of their paths to innovative leadership within the third sector. The leaders who did not identify themselves as part of the target population often obtained a more intimate awareness and understanding of those most affected by social problems through volunteer work. One leader, for example, volunteered for an organization that worked with youth living in the *favelas* who had previously been involved in the drug trade. She said that this experience was crucial for her in terms of understanding the importance of income generation. Through this volunteer experience, she observed that the young men would want to get out of the drug trade but would return

a few months later when they needed to make money and could not get a job in the formal job market. Based on her volunteer experience, the leader observed that one of the biggest problems facing youth in the *favelas* was lack of job opportunities, which influenced her desire to create an initiative that provided income for these youth and their families. She said, “It got me thinking that things can’t stay this way. There has to be a way that you can empower youth and if the mom doesn’t have money but she knows how to sew or do something, then let’s do something so that she can make money and have access to income.” The leader described a process of reflecting on volunteer experience to inform future action, similar to the process described in experiential learning literature (Kolb, 1984; Jarvis, 1987; Brookfield, 1986).

Another leader said that his volunteer work in a school within a prison was his entry point to a life-long trajectory of fighting for the human rights of marginalized populations. For four years he volunteered at a school where he met prisoners who described their lifetime of social exclusion, right up to their current reality of living in prison during the dictatorship. Seeing the conditions of the prison and hearing the prisoners’ stories motivated the leader to work with marginalized populations before they ended up in prison. He explained that this experience “...woke something up in me... it motivated me because I was very young and there were so many young people in the prisons and I felt like I was a type of comfort to them which motivated me even more and this had a big influence on me.”

For nine of the leaders, experience through volunteering was the catalyst to coming up with the idea for their initiatives. One of the leaders, for example, had volunteered with an organization that worked with street children. The kids with whom

he worked were addicted to sniffing glue and never wanted to put their glue bottles down. One day one of the children asked if it was true that he was a boxer. When the social entrepreneur said yes, the kid asked if he would teach him some moves. The social entrepreneur placed the kids in a line and showed them a boxing stance. Without asking, the leader noticed that all of the street kids had left their glue bottles on the floor. This spontaneous moment spurred his idea of using boxing to connect with youth living in vulnerable circumstances. Today his initiative is thriving in three countries, providing boxing instruction and citizenship classes.

All of the leaders in my study talked about the importance of interacting over an extended period of time with populations most negatively affected by social problems such as poverty, social apartheid and inequality. For seven of the leaders, volunteer work was their initial gateway into having interactions over a protracted period of time with these individuals. Similar to the aforementioned scenarios, leaders across interviews typically described a reflective process incorporated into their volunteer experiences, which enhanced their learning experience. Prior research on service learning suggests that having the opportunity to process or reflect augments the service learning experience (Astin et al., 2000). Finally, the leaders' experiences as volunteers not only opened their eyes to the problems that traditionally marginalized individuals confronted, but also instigated in many cases a desire to better understand the causes to the problems and a desire to think of ways to overcome such problems. In other words, their volunteer experience was the impetus to future experiences aimed at better understanding the causes of social problems. My findings on volunteer work align with prior research, which suggests that volunteer work (Komives & Wagner, 2009) and service learning

(Astin et al., 2000) enhances a sense of social responsibility among participants. The research participants described how their volunteer experiences in some way changed their perspective and future actions, including “awakening a social consciousness” and influencing their decisions to pursue a career related to the work they did as a volunteer.

### **Religion**

Religion, particularly institutions associated with the liberal branch of the Catholic Church, played a notable role in deepening the leaders’ understanding of social problems and their desire to do something about the problems. The influence of religion happened in two ways. Eight of the leaders who volunteered did so through an organization connected with the leftist branch of the Catholic Church. For example, one of the leaders, who was in law school, started volunteering at a prison through the *Católica Penal*. He said that the experience exposed him to what life was like in prison and helped him have an in-depth understanding of the reality of the prisoners. Volunteering also helped shape his identity as a lawyer because he realized upon graduation, he wanted a career as a lawyer dedicated to human rights. The leader’s decision to pursue a career based on his volunteer experiences resonated with the findings in Astin et al.’s (2000) research. They found that one of the biggest effects of service learning on the students in their study was a desire to pursue a career in a service field.

Leaders who considered themselves part of the target population also volunteered through organizations connected with the Church. One of the leaders, who grew up in one of the largest *favelas* in Rio, explained that his involvement in civil society began with volunteer work through the Church, and this experience led to a whole trajectory of

activities dedicated to addressing social issues. Adding political and social context to his volunteer experience, he (and other leaders) explained that during the military regime, there were not many social or cultural outlets in peripheral areas except for activities sponsored by the Catholic-based institutions. Because the Church had a stronger presence compared to other institutions in peripheral areas, it had significant potential to influence Brazil's marginalized populations during this time in history.

Religion also shaped the leaders' lives by influencing their values and ways of making sense of the world, which played a part in why the leaders cared enough about the social problems to take action. One of the leaders explained that she was heavily involved with institutions connected with the Catholic Church as a teenager, which had a big impact on her perception of the world, developing her ideas and her political way of thinking. Through her involvement with *Ação Católica*<sup>26</sup> she learned about social movements and met religious figures that had a big influence on her overall personal development, particularly in terms of "consciousness raising." 12 of the 27 leaders interviewed identified religion as an influential institution in regards to the development of their values, belief system and overall approach to life. As they described the role religious institutions played in their socialization process, the leaders said religion encouraged them to place value on love, respect, self-awareness, equality, and serving others, among other descriptions. In relation to experiential learning, the leaders described how prior perceptions and ways of understanding or making sense of their

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<sup>26</sup> *Ação Católica* was a movement created by the Catholic Church in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the aim of influencing and Christianizing Brazilian civilians. The movement transitioned to a more leftist philosophy after the military regime gained power in the 1960s. With a strong student base, the movement focused on national social problems, such as human rights abuses executed by the government.



surroundings evolved, or at times shifted, based on experiences connected with organizations associated with the Catholic Church. Two of the leaders said that Buddhism influenced their social values and the way they approached life.

### **Activism**

Similar to volunteer work, 13 of the leaders described their involvement with social and political activism as pivotal in their learning trajectories as an innovative leader. Several leaders felt that out of all of their experiences, involvement in activism had the most profound influence on their development as a social entrepreneur.

As a group, the leaders have had a strong history of social and political activism, with 56% previously participating in a social protest or political march, 68% belonging to a social activist group, 28% doing door-to-door canvassing, and 40% participating in “other” social activist/social movement activities.

Brazil’s historical political context partially explains the high rates of social and political activism among the social entrepreneurs in my study. One of the leaders summed it up nicely when she described herself as “a child of the sixties,” heavily influenced by socialist and communist ideology prominent during that time period. Across the board, the leaders came of age during a politically charged time when Brazil experienced one of its strongest waves of social movements (Hochstetler, 2000). The driving force behind the social movements was the desire to overthrow the oppressive military regime described in Chapter IV. The surge in social movements and the anti-governmental culture that existed during the 1960s through the 1980s meant that there

were more opportunities to get involved in social movements, compared to other moments in Brazil's history.

What specifically did leaders learn from their involvement in social and political activism? The interview data suggests that belonging to social movements or social activist groups helped shape their understanding of societal problems and ways of thinking about overcoming these problems. As part of their involvement in social movements, the leaders read Marx and other leftist-oriented literatures, which they said introduced them to principles and ideas about a more just society. They also described how involvement in social movements encouraged critically reflective thinking aimed at assessing potentially hegemonic assumptions and thinking of strategies to overcome oppressive systems. One leader, for example, described how her involvement in social movements introduced her to the Frankfurt School of thought and was “theoretically inspired” by the idea that instead of using violence to fight for rights, it was possible to have a cultural transformation. She explained, “And so, thinking in this way, if you are able to have a micro-level revolution and you want to expand to a meso and macro level revolution, you have to be able to transform the micro-level part.” The design of her social initiative was based on this idea of beginning a cultural revolution with youth on the micro-level, and expanding out to the meso and macro level.

Another leader described how, during his student activism days, he read about the logic and social processes utilized by dictatorships in order to understand how they functioned. By understanding their “rationale” and “social machinery,” he and his activist friends could then use this information against them to prevent such processes and systems from reproducing power dynamics. As a social entrepreneur, he utilized this

same approach in his efforts to prevent police brutality in the *favelas*. The more he understood about the mentality and processes of police oppression and brutality, the more effective he said he and his team were at preventing such human rights abuses. Both of the leaders' stories highlight a phenomenon that was described across leaders involved in social activism; the ideology they learned during their social activism days informed how they went about addressing the social issues they aimed to address as a social entrepreneur. The leaders' stories illuminate how socialization within the realm of activism during earlier stages in their lives informed later actions (Brookfield, 1991), thus making connections from past and present experiences.

All but one of the leaders involved in social and political activism described how involvement in social movements opened their eyes to the importance of working with a network of actors toward a common goal. As one leader explained, his prior experience in social movements made him realize, "When you have one plus one it is always more than just two people and to enhance the potential of people to do something that would be harder to do alone." He attributed learning this lesson through his involvement in student activism while at college, where he was constantly putting people into contact so they could work more effectively together on a common cause. Nine of the leaders described how the collaborative processes they learned during involvement in social activism, which encouraged bringing people together to work on and overcome a social problem, informed how they approached their work as a social entrepreneur. The leaders also described how prior experiences of working in a collective group helped them develop certain skills, such as facilitating meetings and working with diverse groups of people. Social entrepreneurial literature emphasizes the importance of leaders' abilities to work

effectively with diverse groups (Alvord, 2009) and my findings suggest that involvement in social activism enhanced the leaders' capacity to do so. They referred often to how prior experiences of working with diverse groups in their activist days informed future actions as a social entrepreneur.

Ten of the leaders explicitly described how their involvement in social movements helped them realize the value of critically reflecting as a group process. One of the leaders, for example, described how he attended meetings when he was a teenager with other social activists. During the meetings participants debated and critically reflected upon social and political issues. Hearing the different perspectives helped him see the value in a group reflective process. The finding adds onto experiential learning literature, which traditionally assumed that reflection occurs as an individual process (Kolb, 1984). All of the leaders in the study engaged in a reflective group process when taking on the role of a social entrepreneur, which proved to be pivotal in informing the social entrepreneurial process (to be discussed in more detail in the next chapter). Finally, being involved in social movements and social activism opened up the leaders' social networks and introduced them to people, who would later become key supporters of their social initiatives. Social networks and social capital will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

### **Formal Education**

The majority of the leaders in the study did markedly well in school. To be specific, 22 out of the 27 said that they had always excelled in school, and that their academic success had an influence on their future trajectories. One leader explained, "I

felt good in school. I love school and was addicted to reading. I read everything possible and because of this it was easy for me to learn so I felt good in school.” Another leader, who came from a poor family, applied to one of the best public schools in the city and was accepted. Her school provided financial and material resources for her to assure that the socioeconomic status of her family did not place her at a disadvantage compared to other students. Her positive educational experience influenced her future career choice of being an educator and was the reason she started an educational initiative to enhance the quality of education for underserved youth. Feeling good in school resonated with adult education literature, which advocates for creating a safe and comfortable learning environment (Boud et al., 1985).

Relative to Brazil’s overall population, the leaders achieved a high level of educational attainment. When asked the highest level of education that the leaders completed, over 75% said a postsecondary degree and 52% have a graduate degree. This contrasts sharply with Brazil’s overall educational statistics from 2007, in which the average number of years of formal schooling for citizens 15 years and older was fewer than eight years (IBGE, 2008). My findings align with prior research findings that state that social entrepreneurs tend to have a higher level of formal education (Van Ryzin, 2009).

Of the leaders who grew up in a poor or working class-household, education was an important factor in achieving social mobility because their college-level degree opened up job opportunities for them. The importance of educational attainment is not surprising considering the exhaustive literature that shows a correlation between social

mobility and education (The World Bank, 2010b). The leaders who came from financially disadvantaged backgrounds said that their high level of educational attainment was not common among their family and friends and that they felt their education was an important factor in their overall trajectory. As discussed in Chapter IV, traditionally Brazil's education systems has contributed to the reproduction of unequal social dynamics; students coming from low-income families typically have attended underfunded schools, while students from more affluent backgrounds have the option of attending public or private schools. Private schools traditionally have offered a better quality education compared to public schools. Eight of the social entrepreneurs in the study who came from low-income backgrounds described an atypical educational experience in some shape or form compared to their peers. For example, one of the leaders explained that his family encouraged him to graduate from *ensino médio* (secondary school), which was unusual since most of friends' families wanted their kids to work after finishing *ensino fundamental* (primary school). The leaders across the board said that their educational credentials contributed to their legitimacy as a leader. For example, one leader explained that he was one of the few academics from the periphery and that people took him seriously because of his academic qualifications, as well as his "inside" perspective of living in a *favela*.

Economic resources influenced how the leaders experienced college. Leaders who came from lower-class backgrounds typically had to work full-time while going to school, which meant they had less time to study and less time for additional college activities. Economic advantages meant that the leaders from affluent families had more free time to focus on their studies and resources to pay, for example, for travel expenses

when partaking in student activism throughout Brazil. Three of the leaders who faced financial struggles during college ultimately instigated social entrepreneurial initiatives aimed at minimizing the structural obstacles that students from similar socioeconomic backgrounds faced. Some of the projects that evolved from within their initiatives have been scaled up to a national level and some incorporated into public policy.

Formal education, particularly at the university level, was important for 12 of the leaders in terms of obtaining certain skills and knowledge conducive to social entrepreneurship. For example, one of the leaders explained that during his doctoral studies he had to learn how to construct and defend an argument. This experience helped him develop strong public speaking skills, which have been particularly useful when presenting his project to potential funders. He also felt that his doctoral studies taught him how to develop a strong conceptual idea, which was important for him when conceptualizing his social initiative. Another leader said that his academic career was fundamental for him in terms of developing discipline, obtaining information specific to law, and establishing a solid conceptual lens that has influenced the way he perceives the world. The social entrepreneurs learned general skills and knowledge conducive to social entrepreneurship through their university studies.

In addition to the broad-spectrum skills mentioned above that could be applied to an array of tasks associated with social entrepreneurship, a postsecondary education allowed 20 of the leaders to learn the specific technical skills, theoretical lenses and knowledge specific to their area of expertise. This educational background served as “tools” so the leaders could potentially excel in their professional career, which was

important because most of the leaders incorporated their area of expertise into their social entrepreneurial initiative. Fernando, for example, said that his training in psychology and family therapy was absolutely crucial in terms of coming up with the overall vision and theoretical framework of his initiative. Zé's legal training was critical in order to create his innovative legal defense center that works toward changing the unjust ways that judicial processes happen in Brazil. Stated differently, the expertise the leaders gained through their university studies informed their work as social entrepreneurs.

### **Professional Experience**

Once immersed in their professional careers, the leaders described in the interviews what and how they learned through work experiences. One leader said that his work as a professor was important for him in terms of developing his public speaking skills. As a social entrepreneur he said that he often needed to describe his initiative to the public in such a way that people understood the purpose of the project and the complex problems it was attempting to address. Communicating effectively, he said, was essential in order to encourage new people to get involved and support the project. Another leader described how he improved his technical professional skills through work experience. He stated, "I developed through the things I was practicing ... this was my central way of learning. You can't be a leader of something without first learning about the subject ... I didn't have a professor and I didn't study [formerly] ... I learned by doing." Across interviews, the leaders described a process of learning through doing. The power of learning through hands on experience has been written about extensively across interdisciplinary contexts (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1983; Fenwick, 2003) and my findings make a strong case against scholars who argue that skills associated with social



entrepreneurship cannot be learned (Dees, 1998; Bornstein, 1998; Thompson et al., 2000).

Another important way in which the leaders learned from professional experience was that they obtained a deeper understanding of a particular social problem and its impact on specific populations. How did this happen? For many of the leaders their careers put them in close contact with those most negatively affected by certain social problems, allowing them to have a more profound understanding of the daily lived consequences of certain social problems. For example, Luis said that nothing was more important in his learning trajectory than his professional experience. He had worked for years with children in a public hospital and a private clinic and observed unequal levels of services offered to kids in the two locations. In his private clinic, for example, family members were permitted to stay with their children during overnight stays, while children in the public hospital had to stay alone because the hospitals did not have the space to accommodate the families. He had observed that this separation from family members significantly impacted the healing process of children. Families with money could afford private healthcare, while low-income families were limited to services at public hospitals, which traditionally offered inferior services. He also witnessed through his work “horrible cases of sexual abuse,” and it was working with this target population everyday that motivated him to start his social initiative. For a handful of the leaders, their professional experiences placed them in regular contact over an extended period of time with individuals most vulnerable to some of Rio’s most disturbing social problems, and the leaders obtained a more profound understanding of the implication of such social problems. The description of the professional experiences resonated with Bateson’s

(1995) description of learning about complex issues through various learning experiences. The social entrepreneurs in the study explained how the culmination of professional (and other relevant) experiences ultimately informed the conceptualization of the initiatives they developed to overcome the problems they observed.

In many cases the leaders had a wide array of different types of work experiences. For example, one leader had worked as a restaurant manager and statistician before pursuing a career in psychology. Another had sold food on the streets in the informal job market, was a semi-professional soccer player, and the manager of a music store. Another leader had worked in public relations, followed by law, before moving into the non-profit world with a focus on micro-finance. In terms of different sectors within which they had worked, the leaders showed a wide range of experiences. In addition to working in the non-profit sector, over 50% (14) had been self employed, 63% (17) had worked in the public sector (including public schools), 44% (12) had worked for a private company, and 37% (10) had worked at a university. One leader described how important she felt it was to work within and bring together people from the different sectors in order to maximize efforts on social projects. She pulled equally from her experiences of working in the public, private or civil sector in her entrepreneurial efforts.

Mehra, Kilduff and Brass (2001) argue that actors who reach out to diverse groups are more likely to do well in their professional careers than those who stay within their own social networks because they have more access to resources and information. In the context of innovative leaders, who must have access to a wide breath of resources and information, an expansive professional social network can be a valuable asset. The data

demonstrates that the majority of the leaders have worked in diverse areas prior to beginning their initiative. Regardless of the area in which the leader was working, what pops out in the data is how important the leaders' professional experiences were in opening up social networks that led to important future resources as a social entrepreneur. The value of social networks is discussed further in the following chapter on social networks and social capital.

### **Reading**

The majority of the leaders in this study said that they “loved to read” and described how reading facilitated their capacity to obtain knowledge conducive to social entrepreneurship.<sup>27</sup> The structured interview alluded to no convergence in terms of the types of texts read by the leaders. For example, while 74% of the leaders in the sample subscribed to a journal, magazine or newspaper during the time of the interview, there was virtually no overlap in terms of subscriptions<sup>28</sup>. *O Globo*, the Brazilian national newspaper, was the most common response among leaders with a total of eight subscribers, followed by the magazines *Carta Capital* (four), *Caros Amigos* (three) and *Nova Escola* (three).

While the structured interview data suggested minimal overlap in the actual texts that leaders read, there was a convergence in terms of *why* leaders read the texts. Most

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<sup>27</sup> Not only did they love to read, but many also enjoy writing. Ten out of the twenty seven leaders have published at least one book.

<sup>28</sup> Data was extracted from the structured interview question: Do you currently subscribe to any journals, magazines, or newspapers that are directly related to your work as a social entrepreneurial leader? If yes, which ones?

said they read to obtain information specific to their field of expertise. The second most common response was to enhance their knowledge on issues related to social movements and activism. A lot of the texts described in the structured interviews and that the leaders referred to during the life history interviews were politically leftist texts. One leader said, “By 20 years old I had already read everything about the Russian revolution, the French revolution – basically all the revolutionary movements in Europe. All of my literature was political literature.” Another had read communist literature and became so obsessed with the material that he wanted to learn Russian. Marx and Freire came up a handful of time during the interviews. As previously discussed, the emphasis on leftist –oriented texts was reflective of Brazil’s politically progressive environment, which partially evolved out of social movements beginning in the 1960s in an effort to overthrow the oppressive military regime.

New communication and knowledge-acquisition technologies influenced the leaders’ access to information, specifically the Internet. Most of the initiatives in this study began during the early 1990s when the Internet was just beginning to be widely used. One leader said, “I have always been a person who reads a lot -everything that I learned I learned reading... I didn’t use the Internet that much 10 years ago.” Today, all but two of the leaders in the study sample said that they have a home computer, and all of the participants said that they use the Internet on a daily basis in their work as a leader. In relation to their social entrepreneurial role, the leaders used search engines most frequently to obtain information on funding and to learn about the work of partner organizations. There was no convergence of Web sites the leaders frequented. Leaders said they used the Internet most frequently for communication purposes, especially email.

I, myself, had initially contacted 15 Ashoka Fellows in my sample through email. One leader said that he is tied to his email 24 hours a day so that he is in continuous contact with people related to his work. Another leader was constantly checking his email during our interview. What was evident for 25 of the leaders was that the Internet was integral to communication and served as an important medium to obtain information.

### **International Interactions**

Just under half of the leaders in the study described how interacting with people from different countries or living overseas played a crucial role in coming up with new ideas for their initiative. Being exposed to a different cultural context provided the leaders an opportunity to experience a distinct way of how one thinks about or makes sense of the world. One of the key informants, for example, had lived in Switzerland and when she returned to Brazil, she noticed how much dirtier Brazil was compared to Switzerland. When her social entrepreneurial partner suggested working on a social project that would help generate income for poor families living in marginalized communities through artisanal work, she suggested they use recycled items to cut down on garbage.

International experiences also provided access to new ideas and information, and sometimes the leaders incorporated these ideas into the social entrepreneurial initiative. For example, one of the leaders initiated a youth theater program based on a program he had observed while doing theater work in New York. Another borrowed the idea from European countries of having a crisis phone line for children to call if they are being abused. No such service existed in Brazil. Another leader instigated a health clinic system

in marginalized areas based on work that already existed in his native country, Holland. Being exposed to ideas in international and cultural contexts different from Brazil proved fruitful for coming up with ideas that were innovative in the context of Rio.

### **Coming Up with an Innovative Idea Based on a Series of Experiences**

Innovation for positive social change is one of the core characteristics of social entrepreneurship (Brouard & Larivet, 2010). Yet, little is known about how social entrepreneurs come up with innovative ideas. A prevalent pattern in my data was that the social entrepreneurs came up with the innovative ideas for their initiatives based on a culmination of experiences, and that these experiences built off of one another on a cognitive and social level. First, as described throughout the chapter, upon reflection certain experiences changed the leader's perspective, understanding, or meaning perspective (Mezirow, 1990), which in turn informed future action (Brookfield, 1995). The types of experiences they had access to influenced the learning that occurred on a cognitive level. Second, having an experience typically was a gateway to future experiences, leading to a series of socially-situated experiences. The life history interviews allowed me to understand how various experiences fit together within the overarching social entrepreneurial learning course and how these experiences informed the leaders in initially thinking about an innovative idea to overcome social problems. The life history interviews also allowed me to analyze how external social factors played a role in shaping the leaders' experiences. While the aforementioned findings emerged across interviews with all of the social entrepreneurs in my study, I will describe one of the leader's stories to illuminate my points and add clarity to my findings.

### **Thiago's Story: A Culmination of Experiences**

Thiago was born and raised in a peripheral neighborhood about an hour outside of the center of Rio de Janeiro. He described his neighborhood as “miserable” and poverty-stricken. Because he had to help earn money for his family, he quit formal school at a young age. As a young adult he was always trying to think of how to get out of his neighborhood and live in better conditions. When he was 18 years old, a young man stopped him on the street and invited him to a meeting of young socialist democratic political activists. (Rio was about to have city elections as the military regime had just ended.) Thiago accepted the invitation. While intrigued by the political debates during the meetings, Thiago did not understand much of their discussion. The person who had invited him realized this and gave him a number of politically progressive books to help him understand the context of the debates. Thiago was hooked. He read all of the books and continued participating in the activist meetings, where participants critically reflected on a variety of topics including the reproduction of unequal power dynamics through Brazil's various institutions and the fundamental principals governing various political parties. Over time, Thiago became more involved in social activist work; he started organizing activists, just as he had seen his peers do when he first got involved. His experiences as an activist, critically reflecting with groups of other young activists about changing the political landscape toward a more just society, encouraged him to think about a career in politics. He eventually became the Sub-Secretary of the City of São Gonçalo. At the time, Thiago was also very involved in his local samba school and because of his strong background in organizing groups in the context of activism and

government responsibilities, he was invited to be the director of the samba school. In Brazil, popular culture serves as an important role or medium for organizing groups, including ones working on issues of social justice.<sup>29</sup>

While Thiago originally went into politics because he wanted to instigate large-scale transformative social change through political systems as advocated and discussed during his activist days, he became frustrated with politics because he noticed that once a social situation improved ever so slightly, people within politics became relaxed and stopped critically reflecting and working on social issues. Based on his experiences as a public figure, he became disillusioned with politics but still wanted to do something that would positively transform society. A few things happened around the same time. First, his samba school won the top award during *Carnaval*, which garnered the group a lot of media attention. Second, one of his good friends whom he met from his involvement in *juventude socialista* came up with the idea of starting a circus school for underprivileged youth within the samba school. The school would use circus arts to engage children in talking about their rights and responsibilities as citizens. A circus school inside a samba school had never been done before, and Thiago thought it a potentially effective space to encourage youth who grew up in the same environment he did to think about emancipatory change. Thiago mentioned the project to a person he

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<sup>29</sup> According to Putnam (1993), participation in cultural centers and leisure activities help nurture civic engagement, which serve as excellent opportunities to learn to work collaboratively with other community members. Such interactions can help build up social capital within a community. In the United States, there has been a decline in recent years in the participation of leisure activities, suggesting that US citizens are less engaged with one another outside of the job market. A potential consequence is being less prepared to cooperate toward shared goals in civic society. Perhaps the US can learn from Brazil in terms of its lively involvement in cultural activities and leisure.



knew through his job in politics, who happened to be the financial director of *Telemar*.<sup>30</sup> This friend was the first one to offer financial support for the circus school, and since then it has evolved into an internationally well-respected social circus program. Today his circus-samba initiative provides an alternative vocational path for youth who traditionally have had limited job opportunities. The educators engage the participants in dialogue about their lives and encourage them to think of ways that they can collectively overcome some of the obstacles they face and take advantage of available resources and opportunities. The shows they perform always have a political social message. The organization is also a major player in local and national discussions and political spaces to ensure that youth traditionally excluded from Brazilian cultural production are front and center in this process.

Thiago's story highlights how his prior experiences informed and influenced future experiences in two key ways. First, as described in experiential learning theories, his experiences with social activism changed his perceptions and assumptions, which enhanced the complexity in which he understood his surroundings. Prior to his involvement in social activism, Thiago had not thought much about social processes and structures and their potential influence on power dynamics and social opportunities. The activist gatherings encouraged him to critically think about such issues and ways of overcoming structures of dominance, which affected his future actions. His story also exemplified a socially situated sequence of learning experiences, as one experience opened up opportunities to other social experiences. His involvement in activism, for

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<sup>30</sup> *Telemar* was the largest telephone company in Brazil. It also provided a significant amount of funding for social projects. In 2007 the company renamed itself *Oi*, which means "hi" in Portuguese.

example, led to a political career, and ultimately Thiago was invited to head the samba school based on prior experiences that demonstrated his capacity to organize groups of people. The samba school became the space in which he launched his social entrepreneurial initiative (which embraced the principles, values, and some of the critically reflective processes he learned through his social activism days).

Leaders across interviews described a similar pattern of cognitive and socially contextualized series of experiences. Thiago's experiences did not occur in a linear fashion (this was the case for the other leaders as well). Once Thiago quit his public sector career, for example, he continued to be involved in activist work. Thiago's story underscores the importance of the social capital embedded in his relationships with the people he met through his activist role and political career, when it came to implementing his project (which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter). His social activist friend contributed to the conceptualization of the innovative project and his political connections led to funding.

Thiago's story also highlights how socio-structural historical factors partially shaped the experiences he had access to, which in turn informed his social entrepreneurial process. Personal experience living in the periphery encouraged him to think about changing his immediate reality, although he was not sure how. Like many of his peers who grew up in a similar income bracket, he had to drop out of school to get a job to help support his family. Lack of education limited his job opportunities and Thiago was frustrated by these socioeconomic constraints (which he said helped him later relate to the students at the circus school). He described his involvement in political activism as a

critical component of his trajectory. As already mentioned, he came of age during a politically charged time in Brazil with an unprecedented number of citizens involved in social movements and activism. Therefore, one could argue that there were more opportunities or chances to have learning experiences grounded in activism and social movements during this period in time compared to other moments in Brazil's history.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter challenges earlier literature on social entrepreneurship, which claims that social entrepreneurs have certain personality traits and special leadership skills, distinguishing them from other types of leaders (Drayton, 2002; Thompson et al., 2000). The underlying assumption is that social entrepreneurs are born with certain abilities and characteristics, such as charisma and passion that cannot be learned. While such characteristics might play a role in social entrepreneurship, I argue that there is a more nuanced story to be told. The chapter demonstrates that the social entrepreneurs in my study learned through experiences and that these experiences informed their social entrepreneurial trajectories. The overarching research questions that this chapter aimed to answer are:

What types of experiences do leaders have access to and rely upon to learn the skills and knowledge necessary to take on the role of a social entrepreneur? What is the interplay between these experiences and taking on the role of a social entrepreneur?

The data shows that there was a convergence of experiences that the leaders relied on to learn the skills and knowledge necessary to take on the role of social entrepreneur.

These experiences included: direct experience with inequality, extended interaction with those most affected by a social problem (target population and personal experience for those who identify themselves as part of the target population), volunteer work, experiences connected with leftist religious institutions, social/political activism, formal education, professional experience, reading and international/intercultural experiences.

The findings support experiential learning literature that argues that adults learn through experience and that reflection can enhance learning experiences by linking past, present and future experiences (Mezirow, 1990). As described by experiential learning experts (Jarvis, 1985; Mezirow, 1990; Bateson, 1995), the leaders' prior experiences shed light on new experiences, ultimately resulting in each leader developing a more complex understanding of specific social problems. For example, one leader completed a Master's thesis on the low expectations teachers had of students living in peripheral areas and how this affected their educational performance. Throughout the thesis project, she set time aside to reflect on her observations in the field and these reflections informed the final analysis of her project. The research project gave her a window into one of the many problems students living in marginalized areas faced. Upon graduation, she got a job working at an afterschool program for at-risk youth. Based on day-to-day interactions with the youth in the program, she learned about other obstacles they faced, including how conflicts among rival drug factions sometimes prevented students from traveling to school, as well as the inadequate infrastructure and the insufficient curriculum of the schools that the students attended. Various encounters and listening experiences, intermixed with reflection, provided her with a more complex understanding of the difficulties that youth living in marginalized spaces faced. The leaders described how,

based on their understanding of certain social problems, which had evolved and deepened cumulatively through experiences described throughout the chapter, each leader came up with innovative ideas aimed at addressing these social problems.

The data illuminates the importance of reflection in the experiential learning process. An implication for the field of social entrepreneurship is that there is value in encouraging and enabling aspiring social entrepreneurs to engage in reflection to inform future actions. There are numerous methods to foster reflection in adult education, which are discussed in more detail in Chapter VII. Another important finding was that the social entrepreneurs typically referred to experiences that put them in contact over an extended period of time with those most negatively affected by social problems as key to understanding certain social issues. The finding suggests that practitioners interested in fostering social entrepreneurship should encourage aspiring innovators to partake in activities (such as volunteer work) that open up avenues to spend protracted periods of quality time with traditionally marginalized populations.

The findings highlight how certain experiences, such as involvement with religious institutions, social activism and volunteer work (that includes a reflective component), informed leaders in terms of how to frame and make sense of social problems and the underlying causes of these problems. Typically, involvement in social movements and/or progressive religious organizations encouraged critical reflection, which stimulated the leaders in my study to critically question oppressive social structures and strategize actions to overcome unjust social processes and systems. One of the outcomes of these experiences, as described by the social entrepreneurs, was that involvement in this environment instilled in them a desire to work toward social change.

Understanding how experiences encourage a sense of social responsibility is important in the realm of social entrepreneurship because one of the distinguishing characteristics is utilizing innovative ideas for positive social change. While the leaders in my study might or might not have been born with an innate sense of social responsibility, they all described how certain experiences (particularly ones involving critical reflection) encouraged them to think judiciously about potentially oppressive social processes and structures and thereafter to work toward overcoming these realities. Experiences involving critical reflection also informed the leaders' approach to social entrepreneurship, as numerous leaders in my study said they embraced a form of critical reflection while taking on the role of a social entrepreneur. An implication for the field of social entrepreneurship is that critical reflection can be an effective way to encourage potential future leaders to think carefully about the processes that lead to social injustices and to encourage them to take action.

The findings in my study showed that the leaders' experiences built off of one another in two ways. As already described, certain experiences changed the leader's prior perspectives or meaning-making schemata, which potentially influenced future actions. In addition to continuity on a cognitive level, the leaders described a series of experiences in which one experience opened up opportunities to related future experiences. The significance being that the kinds of experiences leaders had access to were partially influenced or shaped by prior experiences. If the leaders had not had specific prior experiences, then they potentially would not have had access to subsequent experiences. Continuity of experiences in this sense was a social phenomenon. The series of experiences also highlights how the actors involved in the experiences affected the

leaders' learning trajectories. We see how experiences opened up connections to certain people and the social capital embedded in the relationships played a role during the creation and implementation phases of the social entrepreneurial process (to be discussed in more detail in the next chapter).

The chapter adheres to recent literature on social entrepreneurship that advocates for understanding social entrepreneurship as a historical and socially contextualized process (Fayolle & Matlay, 2010). To be specific, the social reality in which the Brazilian leaders came of age and evolved into social entrepreneurs reflected a particular time in Brazil's history. All of the leaders had lived at least partially through the military regime, which had inspired an unprecedented rise in progressive social movements aimed at overthrowing the regime. Many of the leaders in the study were involved in these social movements. Some of the leaders were also involved with institutions associated with the Catholic Church that embraced liberation theology. The Brazilian case study illuminates how the politically progressive climate intersected with the social entrepreneurs' learning trajectories. Since social entrepreneurship is concerned about instigating positive systemic social change, the field can learn from social movements and the methodologies used by them to encourage future leaders to think about systemic change.

An implication of the findings is that context matters. In terms of socioeconomic structure, the leaders were living in one of the most unequal countries in the world, and in a spatially class-segregated city. The aforementioned structural factors played a role in facilitating and constraining the learning experiences of the leaders, which ultimately informed their social entrepreneurial trajectory. Such factors shaped the types of experiences to which the leaders had access, which inevitably influenced their

learning experiences on both cognitive and social levels. Adult educators focused on fostering social entrepreneurship should understand and develop strategies within the context of the specific social and structural factors that set the stage of learning.



## Chapter VI

### **SOCIAL CAPITAL AND THE LEARNING TRAJECTORIES OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS**

*“I can tell you that you don’t do much without the help of others.”*

*Social Entrepreneur, 2009*

#### **Introduction**

The above quote gets at the heart of this chapter, which examines the role that social networks and social capital play in the learning trajectories of social entrepreneurs and during the process of conceptualizing and implementing innovative initiatives. Social capital theory examines social relationships and the resources embedded therein, which can benefit an individual or a group (Borgatti & Foster, 2003). The importance of social relations in social entrepreneurship has been well documented (Myers & Nelson, 2010; Mair, 2010; Matlay & Fayolle, 2010) and recent conversations within the field of social entrepreneurship have leaned toward examining social entrepreneurship as a social process, rather than a handful of abilities possessed by an individual (Brock, 2008; Mair & Marti, 2006; Zahara et al., 2009). However, little empirical research exists regarding social capital within the field of social entrepreneurship (Myer & Nelson, 2010), particularly the role social capital plays in the learning trajectories of social entrepreneurs. Building on my argument that personal dispositions do not tell the full story of how social entrepreneurs assume innovative leadership roles, and that social entrepreneurship is in fact a social process, the chapter answers the following questions: What social capital do the leaders in the study have access to and rely upon to learn the

necessary skills and knowledge to take on the role of social entrepreneurs? What is the interplay between this social capital and taking on the role of the social entrepreneur?

Though the leaders in my study were embedded in an expansive network of social actors, this chapter focuses specifically on opportunities for social capital embedded in social ties with the leaders' target population and a network of actors, which I will refer to as a community of innovation. The target population signifies the intended beneficiaries of the social entrepreneurial initiatives developed by the leaders, individuals most negatively affected by specific social problems. I define a community of innovation in my study as a network of actors focused on the creation and support of innovative ideas, concepts and products (Grimaldi & Rogo, 2009; Schloen, 2005).

I begin the chapter by briefly revisiting the concepts of social capital and communities of innovation and how they relate in the context of my study. I then describe my research findings, which reveal that the outcome or consequence of the social capital embedded in the aforementioned social relations entailed learning about and gaining a deeper understanding of a myriad of social problems that the leaders ultimately attempted to address through innovative initiatives. Outcomes of social capital also included the development and implementation of innovative projects, as well as learning through experiences related to the implementation of the initiatives, which further shaped the social entrepreneurial process. Based on the findings, I conclude that aspiring social entrepreneurs would be smart to invest in social relations with the target population throughout the entire social entrepreneurial process. I also conclude that instead of conceptualizing social entrepreneurship as an individual process in which a single individual is credited with developing innovative social solutions, social entrepreneurship

should be understood as a social process. Specifically, in an effort to understand the process of how innovative social ideas evolve, scholars, practitioners and other stakeholders would benefit from examining the group or network of actors who play a role in this component of social entrepreneurship. I advocate utilizing the concept of a community of innovation since it is a model specifically aimed at understanding how networks of individuals come up with innovative ideas. Further, communities of innovation with a considerable amount of social capital work well together. A community of innovation made up of interdependent actors with diverse skills, who are mutually invested and involved in pursuing a common vision, is conducive to innovative learning and social entrepreneurial collective action.

### **Conceptual Framework**

#### **Social Capital**

Broadly defined, the term social capital refers to resources entrenched in social relationships that benefit the actors involved (Claridge, 2004). The concept is based on the assumption that participation in social relationships has potentially positive consequences (Portes, 1998). It encompasses both “the social structure of relationships as well as the resources obtained through it and these factors influence one’s ability to act” (Myers & Nelson, 2010, p. 273). Social capital embodies the trust, networks, and mutual obligations that develop in social relationships (Putnam, 1993). While seemingly straightforward, the term social capital is defined in different ways across disciplines and within studies (Adler & Kwon, 2002).

One reason for the distinct definitions of social capital is that authors vary in terms of their emphasis on the processes by which social capital is derived (the structural and relational factors that support the creation and maintenance of social capital) versus the outcomes (or consequences) of social capital (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Portes, 1998; Field et al., 2000; Robinson et al., 2002; Grootaert & Van Bastelaer, 2002b). To gain insight into how social capital is created and maintained, social scientists examine the overall pattern of connections between actors, the interdependence of actors, the quality of interactions and relationship stability among actors over time. On the other end of the spectrum, research emphasizing the benefits of social capital have focused on how it opens up the amount of information available to individuals and groups, which facilitates more-informed decisions (Adler & Kwon, 2002); how it potentially leads to heightened power and influence, which affords individuals an advantage over others; and how social capital potentially builds solidarity, which may lead to social control since groups with high solidarity follow similar norms (Portes, 1998).

As Eastis (1998) states, the concept of social capital must be conceptualized in a multidimensional way in order to maximize its explanatory value. The findings that emerged from my data analysis aligned more with outcomes than structure. Accordingly, I do contextualize the structural and relational factors influencing the social capital embedded in the social relations of the social entrepreneurs, but I focus primarily on the deployment and outcomes of these opportunities for social capital. I first describe how the social entrepreneurs' social relations with the target population, which entailed numerous actors with distinct types of social relations, helped the leaders gain insight into social problems, opened up new networks to the social entrepreneurs, and provided

critical support of the leaders' initiatives. I then focus on an interdependent network of actors that I refer to as a community of innovation and examine how social capital within communities of innovation supported innovative learning, which ultimately resulted in the conceptualization and implementation of social entrepreneurial enterprises.

### **Communities of Innovation**

I utilize the concept of a community of innovation to refer to the network of actors who helped conceptualize and implement the leaders' innovative ideas. I argue that such networks are opportunities for forming and extending social capital for the social entrepreneurs (as well as the collective group). Drawing from social learning theory and innovation literature, a community of innovation is a network of actors focused on the creation and support of innovative ideas, concepts and products (Grimaldi & Rogo, 2009; Schloen, 2005). Coakes and Smith (2007) define it as a form of communities of practice dedicated to the support of innovation. West (2009, p. 316) states that a community of innovation framework is helpful "for understanding the communal, collaborative nature of innovation." Communities of innovation are typically made up of individuals working together towards a common goal, not because they have to, but based on belief in the importance of their common interest. The actors tend to bring diverse perspectives, skills (distinct professional backgrounds), and other diverse resources to the community of innovation.

The communities of innovation model is one of a number of conceptual frameworks aimed at understanding innovative learning, which is conceptualized as a process of creating or articulating knowledge - instead of simply assimilating already

existing knowledge into practices (Engeström, 1999). Learning is achieved through the process of creating. Research on innovative learning in recent years has emphasized the importance of collaboration and suggests that working in communities or groups of actors fosters innovative processes (Engeström, 1999; West, 2009).

Social learning theory informs communities of innovation by offering insight into the process of learning through collaboration. Specifically, it brings understanding regarding “how knowledge is negotiated externally to an individual through interactions with an environment and other persons” (West, 2009, p. 327). According to social learning theory focused on innovation, the process of innovative learning usually begins with group inquiry (Engeström, 1999; West, 2009). Inquiry entails questioning accepted practices, social processes and/or assumptions and is typically the impetus to the innovative learning process. The actors collectively research the problem of mutual concern. The process of innovative learning also entails group reflection, which conforms to the reflective process described in experiential learning theory in adult education. However, in innovative learning literature it typically includes an interpersonal and intrapersonal process, and “new knowledge often emerges as a consequence of these kinds of practices of reflection-in-action” (Hakkarainen, 2004, p. 133). Group reflection entails thinking of ways of overcoming the problem and/or envisioning solutions to address the problem. The actors engage in a non-hierarchal process in which each of the actors of the community contributes ideas and, as much as feasible, each idea receives equal consideration. The innovative ideas and concepts that evolve out of the aforementioned processes occur when the actors (who bring diverse skills and expertise to the table) within the communities of innovation are equally invested and involved in

the social processes of inquiry, reflection and the brainstorming of new ideas and concepts. The next phase entails testing out the new ideas and goals; based on experiences of implementation, the ideas, concepts and visions continue to evolve. As this chapter will describe, the aforementioned processes outlined in innovative learning resonated with the processes described in the life history interviews with the social entrepreneurs in my study.

Social capital theory and communities of innovation intersect in a number of ways. First, working together as a collective group is easier and more effective when a community has an abundant amount of social capital (Putnam, 1993). Prior research suggests that social capital is "...more likely to develop in collectives characterized by a shared history, high interdependence, frequent interaction, and closed structures" (Wasko & Faraj, 2005, p. 38). The conceptual model of communities of innovation aligns with these characteristics, as the structure of this particular network of actors is usually a dense community of interdependent actors, which means the actors are linked together by numerous ties. Also, the innovators typically interact over a period of time and in a highly interdependent fashion. Part of this interaction entails joint inquiry and questioning of "the status quo," which potentially enhances the formation of strong interpersonal ties. This continuous interaction among groups in which there is significant overlap in social ties enhances trust, a form of social capital, which is necessary for solidarity and enhances collective action. In this case, collective action entails developing and implementing innovative ideas for social change. Social capital theory has the potential to inform communities of innovation about social structures that foster or enable communities of innovation to maximize their collaborative efforts.

How do communities of innovation relate to social entrepreneurship? One of the distinguishing characteristics of social entrepreneurship is developing an innovative idea to overcome a social problem. As I will describe, the innovative ideas of the initiatives in my study evolved from a collaborative learning process that occurred after implementing the idea, adhering to the process described in social learning theory and within literature on communities of innovation. Typically, the concept of communities of innovation has been applied to research grounded in the for-profit sector. Applying the concept to research focused on social entrepreneurship- a field that emphasizes social change versus profit-making- provides a new context or opportunity to further develop the concept. Merging social capital and communities of innovation literatures, I argue that the benefits of the social capital embedded in the communities of innovation led to innovative learning, which ultimately informed the collective goals of social entrepreneurial processes.

One of the aims of the chapter is to contribute to recent literature on social entrepreneurship that examines it as a social process (Mair, 2010; Brock, 2008; Zahara et al., 2009). I focus on social relations that played an important role in the conceptualization and implementation of the social entrepreneurs' initiatives. Specifically, had the leaders not been embedded in relationships with the target population and their communities of innovation, then their social entrepreneurial learning trajectory and the social entrepreneurial process would have panned out in different ways. The findings section will contextualize and describe the outcomes of social capital embedded in the entrepreneurs' relationships with both the target population and within



the specific networks of their communities of innovation (which in some cases included actors identified as the target population).

## **Findings**

### **Social Capital and The Target Population**

#### **Introduction to the Target Population**

More than any social actor, the target population featured most frequently in interviews with social entrepreneurs regarding their learning trajectories. Considering how prevalent the mention of the target population was in the data, it seems appropriate to start with this group of actors when analyzing the leaders' social networks and social capital embedded in these relationships. I refer to the target population as the group of actors most negatively affected by the social problem that the leaders' initiatives are attempting to overcome. They are the intended direct recipients (and in some cases indirect recipients) of the leaders' initiatives. Among the initiatives, the target population included: youth living on the streets, in *favelas* or other low-income areas of Rio de Janeiro; youth who have experienced or risk experiencing discrimination based on race or class; youth and families living in poverty; youth who are at-risk of or are survivors of sexual and physical violence; and youth who have been imprisoned. 16 of the 27 leaders identified themselves as part of the target population.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> The purpose of asking "Do you identify yourself with the target population (either now or during some point in your life)?" was to find out which of the leaders had personally experienced the challenges and obstacles that the target population face, and if and how these experiences potentially informed their understanding of social problems and conceptualization of the initiatives. Four of the leaders said that they identified themselves as part of the target population because their initiatives were open to all youth living in Rio de Janeiro, and since they had previously been a child and adolescent growing up in Rio they said they identified themselves as part of the target population. However, their narratives would suggest that they personally did not face the lived consequences of the social problems that their initiatives were

The target population encompassed a wide-ranging assembly of individuals that varied in the types of social connections they had with the social entrepreneurs in my study. In some cases, social entrepreneurs had strong ties (close relationships) with some of the target population members, while in other cases they had weak ties (considered target population members acquaintances). In some situations, the target population members were part of the social entrepreneurs' close network, meaning they had many connections to and were deeply imbedded in social relations with the social entrepreneur's family members and close friends and colleagues. In other cases, the target population was part of the social entrepreneur's open network and had very few connections with his/her most personal social circles. In some contexts, few connections existed among individual target population members, while in other cases the target population was itself embedded in thick networks, unrelated to the social entrepreneur him/herself. Further, like any relationship, these social relations shifted over time. The leaders, for example, might have developed close relationships over time with certain target population members, while drifting apart from others. This diversity in relations with the target population was not surprising, considering the number of individuals that made up the target population. While prior to beginning an innovative initiative the social entrepreneurs might have initially interacted with a handful of individuals considered to be part of the target population. Once the initiative began and grew, the social entrepreneurs tended to expand their reach and interactions, and in some cases the target population numbered in the thousands.

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attempting to overcome. I decided to keep their answers as is, in order to reflect the actual responses of the leaders.

All of the leaders felt comfortable with the term *público-alvo* (target population) except for one. This particular leader preferred the term *colaboradores* (collaborators) because he felt that “target population” suggests a top-down model and that the most socially oppressed actors need to be actively involved in socially transformative initiatives for true social change to occur. His argument is particularly compelling, considering the criticism that non-profit organizations are disconnected from the communities they intend to support and are reproducing unequal power dynamics (Lafuente, 2005).<sup>32</sup>

### **Understanding Complex Social Problems and Conceptualizing Innovative Initiatives**

When the leaders were asked during the structured interview what experiences they considered very important to learn the skills and knowledge necessary for different stages of social entrepreneurship, the leaders most frequently rated “interacting with the target population” as “very important” when it came to “understanding the social problem” and “conceptualizing the initiative.” Another structured interview question asked whom the leaders would turn to if they needed help in realizing certain tasks associated with social entrepreneurship. The leaders most frequently marked “target population” if they were to seek a more concrete understanding of a social problem.

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<sup>32</sup> Considering how pivotal the target population is to the social entrepreneurial process, I was interested in how the leaders met their target population. The prior chapter touched upon a series of experiences, some of which opened up access to their target population prior to beginning their initiative. Specifically, 13 said they gained access to their target population through personal experience, 13 said through volunteer work, eight said through a school-driven project, and 16 made contact through professional work. 16 of the leaders had gained access to the target population through a mix of the aforementioned experiences.

The semi-structured interview data reaffirmed the aforementioned findings from the structured interview data. The life history interviews revealed how experiences with the target population fostered the leaders' awareness of social problems and the repercussions of these problems on the lives of those most vulnerable to the social problems. Interaction over an extended period of time with the target population offered insight into realities such as sexual abuse in the home (which was a common reason why kids opted to live on the streets), the common occurrence of police brutality against street kids, the possibility of falling victim to a stray bullet during a confrontation between the police and the drug factions, or the lack of public services in marginalized spaces and the repercussions for child development. As one leader explained, while it was possible for her to learn about socioeconomic and socio-political problems through texts, "The problems that I learned more about... a lot of that stuff you can only learn by interacting with people. "

The interview data also showed that interaction with this group of actors encouraged the leaders to delve deeper into the roots of the social problems they observed, leading to a more complex understanding of the problems. As mentioned in the prior chapter, one leader described how she did her Master's thesis on middle-class teachers' perceptions of youth living in *favelas* in the *zona norte* of Rio. She observed that many of the teachers assumed that the students were not capable of learning and based on this assumption, often did not show up to work. She concluded that the students were not doing well in school because they missed numerous days of school when their teachers did not show up. After obtaining her graduate degree, she got a job working at a supplementary educational program located in a *favela* that was geared toward children

who had been expelled from school. Observing adversities such as the impact of the drug trade on the daily lives of the students and the students' low levels of literacy and education due to lack of quality education encouraged the leader to return to university and learn more about educational theory and policy. Based on a mix of these experiences, she concluded that it did not make sense to have a supplementary educational program when the schools the students attended offered an inadequate educational experience. She continued working throughout her graduate studies and combined theory with practice, ultimately developing an alternative school system aimed at providing a quality education and better meeting the needs of underserved youth.

Her story and the stories of the other leaders illuminated the fact that the leaders were not born understanding the social problems that the target population faced. Instead, the leaders' narratives highlighted the importance of interacting with the target population over an extended period of time in order to understand the problems they face. In other words, an outcome of the social capital embedded in relationships with the target population was a complex understanding of certain social problems.

### **Building Trust Through Long-Term Relationships with Frequent Interaction**

Once the leaders instigated their innovative projects, the target population continued to play a critical role both in the leaders' learning trajectories as well as in realizing the social entrepreneurial process. Most of the leaders had had connections with the target population over an extensive period of time prior to beginning their initiatives, which helped foster the necessary trust (a form of social capital) to participate in their projects (an outcome of this social capital). One leader, for example, worked for years with a group of street children before initiating a school geared toward meeting their

specific needs. She made sure that she visited them at the same place and the same time everyday to instill a sense of dependability. Further, unlike many of the interactions the street children had with other adults or authority figures (including physically abusive interactions with the police), the leader interacted with them in a non-authoritarian manner, and demonstrated her concern for their well-being through her actions. If a child, for example, needed medical care, then she took the child to a doctor. If an incident occurred the previous night that had upset a child, she would listen attentively and attempt to give him or her emotional support. In extreme instances, the leader took a child to her home. For example, the first time I met this particular leader, she had a four-year old girl staying with her. The girl had fled her home because she had been sexually abused numerous times by her mother's boyfriend and had no alternative housing options. The child stayed with the leader until one of her family members offered to take her in. The children learned over time through many interactions with this particular leader that she was someone they could count on. When the doors to her new school opened, she said that the children attended willfully because they already knew her and trusted her. Without the support of the attendees, the initiative would not have taken root. The long-term interaction between the actors speaks to the processes by which the social capital was derived (Portes, 1998) and the outcome of this trust was the participation of the street children in the initiative.

Leaders across interviews described comparable processes of interacting with vulnerable youth in a similar manner that focused on the well-being of the child and entailed listening to better understand the child's experiences and perspectives. They also engaged in fun activities with the youth that aimed to instill a sense of belonging, stability

and safety. These interactions played a key role in developing trust. For example, I accompanied a social entrepreneur working with street children on an *abordagem*, or excursion, in which he approached children living on the streets and attempted to develop connections with them. Based on years of experience, he knew exactly where groups of street children liked to congregate during the day. As we approached the stoplight close to the famous Maracanã soccer stadium in the northern region of Rio de Janeiro, three street children with no shoes or shirt stood in the middle of the road begging for money from passing cars. They looked sad and skittish, as if they were ready to run in case of unexpected trouble. One of them glanced toward us and when he saw *Tio Rodolfo* (the social entrepreneur), a smile spread across his face and he ran toward our car. His friends followed and when they reached the car they gleefully yelled, “*Tio Rodolfo!*” The leader told them that today was the International Day of the Rights of Children, and that the Center (the home base of the initiative he had started) was having a party. The children gathered several of their friends who were nearby, and then hopped into the van. Based on prior experiences at the Center, they knew that it was a safe place with food, showers, clean clothes, educational activities and fun games. Many of the staff members were previously street children who, thanks to the efforts of Rodolfo and his colleagues, were no longer living on the streets. Because they shared similar experiences with the youth visiting the Center, they could relate to them and offer an important form of emotional support. Based on the interactions I observed between the street children and Rodolfo, it seemed that Rodolfo genuinely cared about the well-being of the youth, and that the youth perceived Rodolfo as someone they could trust.

The leader's story of an extended engagement with the target population was not unique. All of the leaders in the structured interview said that they had had personal contact with their target population before beginning their initiative and all but five had had at least five years of contact (contact entailed face-to-face interactions, talking on the phone or corresponding through mail). More than half had had at least 11 years of contact and eight of the leaders had had 20 or more years of direct contact with the target population.<sup>33</sup> While 70% said that they had had contact with their target population every day prior to beginning their initiative 63% said they currently had contact with them every day. This is not surprising, as prior research suggests that as social entrepreneurial initiatives expand and enter a scaling up phase, it becomes more important for leaders to interact with diverse groups of people in order to publicize, fundraise and expand the initiative (Alvord et al., 2004).<sup>34</sup> The length of time that the social ties have existed between the leaders and the target population actors and the frequency of interaction are structural factors that play a part in the creation and maintenance of social capital. The findings suggest that interaction over an extended period of time and frequent contact were important factors in the learning trajectory of social entrepreneurs, leading to trusting relationships conducive to obtaining their participation during the start-up stage

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<sup>33</sup> I would argue that the leaders had had even more experience with the target population than the structured interview results suggest. I learned through the life history interviews that one leader who marked less than one year of interaction with the target population prior to beginning her initiative on the structured interview, and two leaders who marked one to two years, had had additional years of experiences with other marginalized populations. During the life history interviews they described how these experiences informed their work as social entrepreneurs. Similarly, one of the leaders marked five to six years, but in fact had had a lifetime of interaction with the target population. Another leader marked 11 to 15 years of experience with homeless kids, but her life history interview indicated that she had had over 20 years of experience prior to beginning her initiative.

<sup>34</sup> Another explanation for this shift over time is that as the initiatives expanded, the number of the target population also grew, meaning that the leader could not spend as much individual time with the individual target actors.



of their initiatives. One implication of this finding is that it goes against the trend of embarking on an entrepreneurial initiative based solely on an innovative idea but not grounded in extensive experience with those who will be most affected by an initiative (Durieux & Stebbins, 2010).

### **Bridge Ties to Larger Networks of Target Populations**

Once the leaders implemented their initiatives, ties with actors considered to be the target population proved to be important for opening up larger networks to the target population. The leaders explained that target population actors who were involved with their initiatives told others considered to be part of the target population about their experiences. This encouraged more target population actors to participate in the initiatives. In other words, the target population actors served as a bridge tie to other networks of target populations. A bridge tie is a social tie that links two social networks together and is the only connecting tie that exists between the networks (Burt, 1990). This “word-of-mouth publicity” served as an important medium for the leaders in terms of obtaining access to a larger base of the target population. Leaders described how they obtained a deeper understanding of a social problem and its implications because the leaders had new experiences with a broader network of the target population. For example, one leader met a handful of community leaders, who talked to her about some of the challenges their communities faced. The community leaders introduced her to other community leaders, who lived in different areas of the city and faced different contextually-based challenges. 20 of the 27 leaders described this process of obtaining access to the target population through the target population, once their initiatives had begun.

### **Evolution and Expansion of Innovative Projects**

Social ties with the target population proved to be a key ingredient in terms of the evolution and expansion of some of the initiatives.<sup>35</sup> For example, one leader who worked with street children often interacted with their family members in an effort to encourage the children to return home or to move to the home of a family member where the child felt safe. Because many of the family members lived in *favelas*, the leader started meeting residents from certain communities. Based on his interactions with them, he learned about the realities of the drug trade and its influence on the communities. Based on these interactions, he expanded his initiative to include a program focused on drug trade prevention within the *favelas*. He said that he was able to initiate the drug prevention project because over time he had built trusting relationships with community residents. Connections to the target population opened up a new network of actors who offered insight into the social problems within a different social context. In other words, introductions to additional target actors exposed the social entrepreneur to a stock of social capital separate from the resources in his networks, and the ultimate outcome was new information that informed the social entrepreneur in his work, as well as the expansion of the initiative. This theme of learning through interaction with the target population via the initiative is an important one. Later in the chapter, I will describe in more detail a learning process that entailed interaction with the leader, the target population and actors who made up communities of innovation.

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<sup>35</sup> Although I only intended to focus on the initial conceptualization and implementation of innovative social initiatives, an unexpected finding of my study was that an outcome of social capital embedded in social ties with the social entrepreneurs and the target population contributed to the expansion of the initiatives.

To sum up, across interviews, leaders stated that members of the target population were some of the most important actors in relation to their learning trajectories and their social entrepreneurial processes. One of the most important benefits of the social capital embedded in the relationships with target population actors was obtaining information and insight into the lived consequences of social problems and implications for those most vulnerable to the problems. This learning process occurred over an extended period of time, which entailed listening and interacting with the target population and reflecting on these interactions. This process led to a diagnostic of the problems the target population faced. Such insight helped inform the leaders as they conceptualized initiatives attempting to address the social problems (an outcome of the social capital). According to the leaders, having an understanding of the problems the target population faced led to “more effective efforts” in overcoming the challenges. Once leaders instigated their initiatives, social ties with the target population opened up new networks to target populations, which was important in terms of further deepening the leaders’ understandings of social problems. A more complex understanding of social problems informed the leaders as they (and their communities of innovation) developed new projects within their initiative, in an effort to more effectively address the social problems. Broader access to the target population was also conducive to scaling up the initiatives, a key distinguishing factor of social entrepreneurship.

While the above summarizes the deployment and outcome of social capital embedded in social relations with the target population, it is important to note the structural and relational factors that led to the evolution and maintenance of social capital. The leaders in my study developed relationships with the target population actors

over a significant amount of time (at least five years of interaction for the majority of the leaders), with frequent and consistent contact (in many cases daily contact). The social entrepreneurs demonstrated their concern for the well-being of the target population through their interactions. Over time one of the forms of social capital that evolved from this consistent interaction was trust. Trust ultimately influenced the actions of the involved actors and the outcome or effect of this trust was actions (described above) that contributed to the social entrepreneurial process.

### **Social Capital and Communities of Innovation**

*“Social action only works when you have a group of people together reflecting on something and must have the desire to transform.”*

*Social Entrepreneur, 2009*

### **Introduction to the Communities of Innovation**

Prior research on social entrepreneurs that used a case study approach typically credited a single leader with coming up with and conceptualizing an innovative idea to overcome a certain social problem (Dees, 1998; Bornstein, 2007). My research challenges this individualist model. While the social entrepreneurs in my study might have come up with the original ideas for their initiatives, it was a group of individuals that filled in the details and turned the ideas into functioning initiatives. The leaders all referred to a dense network of actors as being absolutely essential to the conceptualization of their initial idea and its implementation. A dense network is defined as frequent interaction with numerous social ties among the actors in the community. I refer to this network of actors as a community of innovation, and I argue that this

network is an opportunity for social capital for the leaders in my study. In the next section, I will describe the outcomes of utilizing this social capital, specifically how the communities of innovation contributed not only to the leaders' learning trajectories, but also to the conceptualization, implementation and evolution of the initiatives. The findings support the mounting literature that perceives social entrepreneurship as a social process (Matlay & Fallooye, 2010; Mair, 2010). It also speaks to social capital theory that advocates that tight-knit groups with dense overlaps of social interaction among actors facilitate "coordination and communication and amplify information about the trustworthiness of other individuals" (Putnam, 1993, p. 38).

### **Conceptualizing and Developing Initial Innovative Ideas**

When asked during the structured interview who came up with the idea for the initiative, 21 of the 27 leaders stated that they were the only person who originally came up with the idea, while five leaders said that a group of people (including themselves<sup>36</sup>) came up with the original idea. When asked whom they considered absolutely vital in further developing and conceptualizing the initial idea of the project, all of the leaders except one said a group of people.<sup>37</sup> 20 of the leaders indicated a group of three or more individuals as absolutely essential to the conceptualization of the project.

The life history interview data reaffirmed the structured interview findings. Thus, for all of the cases (except one), the leaders described a group of actors (that I refer to as

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<sup>36</sup> One leader responded with "other" and explained that she originally worked with a group of people on human rights issues as part of a religious-based initiative. However, the church wanted to dismantle the group, so she suggested they separate from the church and form their own secular group.

<sup>37</sup> Though one leader responded during the structured interview that no one helped him develop his original idea of the initiative, during the interview he described in detail how important a team member was in developing and implementing the citizenship class, which was a defining component of the initiative.

a community of innovation) that contributed to conceptualizing the innovative ideas of the initiative.

Naturally, the life history interviews allowed me to get a better sense of the processes involved in conceptualizing and implementing the innovative ideas. The prior chapter described a culmination of experiences (discussed during the interviews) that played a role in how the leaders became aware of certain social problems as well as how they began thinking of ways of overcoming the social problems they observed. This offered insight into how the leaders “came up with the idea of their initiatives” on their own. At this point in the trajectory, the communities of innovation enter the picture. Across the board, the leaders described a process in which they got together with at least one other individual and, through a series of conversations, discussed the social problems about which they were concerned, critically questioning and analyzing root causes and thinking of ways to overcome them. To illustrate this process, one of the leaders explained that he was frustrated by the social exclusion he experienced living in the *favelas* and felt a need to do *something* about it. He began having conversations with two friends who had had similar experiences and shared his desire to do something about the social issues they faced. They started meeting on a weekly basis to discuss a specific issue, such as racism or police brutality. During the conversations everyone had an equal opportunity to speak and be heard. Through these conversations they began to develop a shared vision about issues that needed to be addressed. Over time, they began inviting friends or acquaintances who could contribute in a substantive way to the conversations, and the gatherings eventually grew to include up to 600 people. Based on these discussions, they created educational and cultural programs aimed at addressing the

social problems discussed during gatherings. The core group of three that originally organized the discussions continued to be the driving force of the initiative. Collectively, they formed a tightly knit group whose social relations, they explained, only grew tighter through their collaborative efforts. Since its early years, the initiative has expanded all over Brazil, as well as to 10 countries. Now an NGO, the organization's principal objective is still connected to those initial conversations: transformative change through critical reflection and social action based on this reflective process. The history of this particular NGO highlights a similar process that I heard across the leaders' narratives. They described a process in which a group of actors got together and critically reflected on a social issue that they wanted to change.<sup>38</sup>

In some cases, like the one I just described, the specific ideas that made up the initiatives evolved out of a group dynamic. In other cases, the origins of the ideas could be traced back to a particular individual within the network of innovative actors who came up with the specifics of the programs. One leader, for example, described how a

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<sup>38</sup> The process that I just described (as well as the process described by the other leaders in my study) aligned with Engeström's expansive learning theory (2001), which informs communities of innovation literature. According to him, innovative learning evolves through a process in which a group of individuals first must raise questions about current practices and realities. They then collaboratively reflect and analyze their concerns about the "status quo." This stage is followed by modeling a new explanation, examining and implementing the model, reflecting on the process, and consolidating the new practice. In the scenario I just described, the leader and his friends (and eventually larger groups of people) gathered to critically reflect on the "status quo" and then brainstormed about ways of overcoming issues (modeling a new explanation). They experimented with ways of overcoming the social issues through social programs and campaigns. After implementing a project or program they critically reflected on their experiences and aimed to improve upon their efforts. While this chapter is not about expansive learning theory, Engeström's expansive learning theory offers a useful lens to understand the social learning processes that occurred within the communities of innovation of which the leaders were a part. Something that is distinct in my study compared to prior literature on communities of innovation grounded in the market sector, was the focus on innovation in order to improve the lives of traditionally marginalized populations. Accordingly, typically their reflective processes relied on critically reflective tactics that focused on power dynamics and how certain social processes fed into the marginalization of certain groups of people, and ways to prevent these processes.

team of eight people came up with the programs within the initiative he had created. One of the core actors, for example, designed a comprehensive system of training community health agents to serve as a bridge between the residents in their communities who did not have access to health services and the health care system.

In this instance, as in others I documented during my study, the ideas or the “guts” of the programs came from social actors within the community of innovation and not solely from the individual social entrepreneur. The scenarios also exemplify how the conceptualization of the initiative was a collaborative process that relied heavily on the diverse experiences and resources of the team players. In other words, one of the first key outcomes of tapping into the social capital embedded in the communities of innovation was coming up with innovative program ideas. Each of the individual actors was actively engaged in the innovative process, which fostered a sense of investment in and commitment to the group’s collaborative goals. Leaders across interviews described a similar pattern and the findings speak to the social entrepreneurial literature that advocates for viewing social entrepreneurship as a group of actors, as opposed to the individual leader model. Expanding the lens beyond an individualist leadership perspective allows researchers to have a more complex understanding of other factors that play a role in the social entrepreneurial process. Social capital theory suggests that social networks that are organized horizontally and not hierarchically, like the one I just described, encourage social capital formation (Putnam, 1993). This is relevant because communities with a significant stock of social capital tend to work more effectively together.



### **Diverse Resources**

In many instances, the actors who made up the communities of innovation had diverse professional backgrounds and distinct perspectives relative to the leaders in my study. Prior research suggests that such diversity is conducive to innovative learning (West, 2009). But how did the leaders obtain access to actors with such diverse experiences, information and professional backgrounds? Social capital literature that aligns with Granovetter's "strength in weak ties" would argue that the leaders are more likely to obtain new information from social actors with whom they have weak ties than strong ties because information obtained from close social circles leads to repetitive information. Social capital research advocating the advantages of weak ties suggests that actors should circulate within diverse social circles to obtain new information and to maximize diverse resources embedded in social ties. My data aligns with this logic; the leaders in my study met the actors within the communities of innovation through an array of different experiences (described in the prior chapter), which exposed them to various distinct social circles.

### **Implementation of Innovative Initiatives**

*You got to be really careful about this whole leadership thing because if I were to use a ship analogy... if you don't have a captain making a decision about where that ship is going... then the ship is not going to go anywhere but if you don't have all the... other people running the ship, then the ship is not going anywhere.*

*Social Entrepreneur, 2009*

Once the initial conceptualization of the programs and initiatives were developed, the leaders described how they implemented their ideas. Janice Pearlman, an expert in Brazilian urban studies and innovative social change, said that in the research she had

done on innovative leaders, typically those with interesting ideas were lousy at implementation, and vice versa (personal communication, April, 1 2009). The next section describes how deploying the social capital embedded in the communities of innovation was not only valuable in terms of the conceptualization of the initiative, but also proved to be invaluable during implementation. While the individuals who made up the communities of innovation played a critical role in many aspects of the social entrepreneurial process, there were five outcomes of accessing the social capital embedded in the communities of innovation that were particularly prevalent in the interviews. They completed tasks that contributed to the realization of the initiative, they provided emotional support to the leader which encouraged them to keep working despite challenges, solidarity led to collective action (and collaborative experiences further fostered trust and a sense of solidarity), they provided a community of learning conducive to innovative learning both on an individual level and as a group, and they opened up other forms of capital such as financial capital and symbolic capital, which contributed to the sustainability and expansion of the social entrepreneurial enterprises.

Before reviewing these findings, it is important to first mention that the majority (but not all) of the individuals who helped conceptualize the innovative idea for the initiative were the same actors who contributed to the initial implementation and initial evolution of the initiative. In total, 163 individuals made up the communities of innovation among the 27 leaders (averaging six individuals per community of innovation). Out of this group, 113 contributed to the conceptualization as well as implementation. 23 of the 163 actors only helped with conceptualization, while 27 individuals joined the communities of innovation only after implementation of the

initiative had begun. I still refer to those involved in the implementation stage as a community of innovation (140 individuals in total, averaging five per community of innovation) because prior literature recognizes that a shift in actors is inevitable as the community of innovation transitions from idea to implementation (West, 2009).<sup>39</sup>

Further, while numerous actors were responsible for the execution of the initiative at any given moment throughout their histories, the network I refer to below includes the actors that the leaders talked about when describing the initial implementation of the project and that the leaders felt were fundamental in its early evolution (within the first year or so).

### **Completing Tasks**

The most evident example of deploying social capital embedded in the community of innovation during the implementation stage of social entrepreneurship was human capital, in the form of actors completing various tasks to make the initiative function. There were numerous examples across interviews in which the actors from this

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<sup>39</sup> To decide whom to include as a communities of innovation actor, I referred to the structured interview question, “Excluding yourself, how many people were involved in developing the initial idea of the project? Please only include people who you consider to be absolutely essential in the conceptualization of the project.” I entered the leaders’ responses in a spreadsheet. The life history interviews then included a question about the ways in which each individual mentioned in the aforementioned structured interview question contributed to the conceptualization of the initiative. Triangulating allowed me to check for data accuracy. I added an additional spreadsheet column for each of the individuals mentioned when the entrepreneurs described the process of conceptualizing the initial innovative project idea. The life history interviews also detailed the implementation phase of the leaders’ initiatives, including individuals who played a role in the beginning stages of the initiatives. More times than not, the individuals who had been mentioned in the conceptualization phase were also reported to have played a specific implementation role. I asked about individuals that leaders described during conceptualization but not implementation. I continued coding the life history interviews and added to my spreadsheet any names mentioned during the initial implementation stage but not during the conceptualization stage. I added a new spreadsheet column to indicate each individual referenced during the interview and whether he/she was mentioned during conceptualization only, both conceptualization and implementation, or implementation only.

network brought a diverse base of knowledge and skills and provided a service grounded in their particular strength or area of expertise. One leader described how the various resources within his community of innovation contributed to the execution of the initiative:

We mobilized people from within the samba school. Everyone has the capacity to do something... we got a person in the neighborhood who knew capoeira, someone else who had worked with kids, another who taught football, another who was from the samba school, so the social action that we started was like this.... We had a dentist.

Another leader described:

There was a group of us that worked together... It was 19 people who worked in various areas--social assistance, pedagogy, physical education--and we worked together initially and developed the [NGO].... We had a group that organized the workshops in which the youth would have to study every day and another group organized the food, and then another group worked on helping those youth who would leave after 6 months.... And each person had a specific activity and they chose what they wanted to do.

Diversity in resources in the form of human capital among actors within this particular network included, but were not limited to: handling the initiative's budget and other administrative needs, writing up a proposal to obtain future funding, providing journalistic and publicity support, developing and implementing the educational component of a program, and preparing the necessary legal documentation to become an official non-governmental agency. In line with social entrepreneurial research (Thompson et al., 2000) and community of innovation literature (West, 2009) that describe the importance of working in teams with diverse resources distinct from the leaders, many of the actors within this network had experience or an area of expertise that the leader lacked. For example, one leader explained that the actors within her implementation network had strong administrative and business backgrounds, worlds apart from her

theater background. Diversity in resources did not only occur in the form of professional background and area of expertise, but also in personality types. In a handful of cases, leaders explained that they had a “dreamer” profile while the actors within their implementation network fell under the category of “doers.” As one leader stated, referring to a member of her community of innovation:

I have an entrepreneurial profile in which I am the dreamer and she is the one who “has a foot on the ground.” She is the one who actually makes the money, does the analysis etc. If you were to depend on me, the project would die. She is the operational one that makes things function and I am the ideas/dreamer person.

Expanding on the previous leader’s sentiments, three leaders described a specific dynamic in which the leader “was the dreamer and came up with ideas,” another team member was the “business-oriented person,” and another had his/her “feet on the ground” in terms of administrative tasks and “getting things done.” What was apparent from the findings was the importance of a group of actors who collectively provided diverse resources to realize the initiative, which challenges the notion of an individual social entrepreneur learning how to manage the many responsibilities and tasks necessary for social entrepreneurship. Lave and Wenger (1991) found in their research that diversity in expertise was not always a critical factor among communities of practice. In my study, diversity in resources among actors in the communities of innovation was the predominant pattern. However, there were a number of instances in which the network of implementation actors had similar professional backgrounds and this commonality served as an asset because they could build off of one another’s experiences.

### **Emotional Support, Trust and Solidarity**

The leaders in my study described how the individuals within their communities of innovation offered invaluable emotional support by believing in the idea of the initiative. They were committed to the philosophy and the objective of the idea, and the outcome was that it encouraged the leaders to continue working on their vision, despite challenging obstacles. Prior research suggests that social entrepreneurs often experience resistance from members of society who wish to keep the “status quo” (Bornstein, 2007). This was the case for a number of the leaders in my study, which highlighted the importance of having social actors who supported and believed in their work.

Solidarity that evolved out of interdependent relations among actors was another important benefit of social capital among the actors within the community of innovation. Across the board, leaders often spoke about a sense of solidarity within their communities of innovation, which was conducive to collective action. One leader explained,

We began our work with our desire and our few resources pulled together. And our initial internal support was really not financial but our drive... our internal motivation and our initiative and desire to do something.

It is important to touch upon social structural components that played a role in the development and maintenance of the social capital embedded in this network of actors. Social ties shift over time and communities of innovation are no exception. At this stage of the trajectory (implementation), the majority of actors within the communities of innovation had been working together on a regular basis (at least weekly and in most cases daily) for an extended period of time. When a number of the leaders first started working with their communities of innovations while conceptualizing their ideas, the

leaders described their relationship with the actors in the community of innovation as weak ties (acquaintances). A number of leaders described how their relationships with the actors in the communities of innovation shifted over time to become strong ties (close friends and confidants). Working together over an extended period of time on a specific mutually shared goal lent itself to developing a close-knit network of interdependent actors. Through shared experiences, the actors learned that they could rely on one another, and engaging in shared experiences helped establish a sense of cohesion among group members. As Putnam (1993) states, “Successful collaboration in one endeavor builds connections and trust - social assets that facilitate future collaboration...” (p. 4). Stated simply, trust was a specific form of social capital that evolved out of this social arrangement, which was conducive to future social action.

### **Learning From Other Social Actors**

Because my study focuses on understanding how the leaders learned, I asked probing questions about the social networks the leaders relied on to learn the skills and knowledge necessary to be a social entrepreneur. I had anticipated numerous examples in which the leaders learned specific skills or information (acquisition learning) from specific individual actors within their communities of innovation. In reality, there were few examples. One leader described how her husband was doing his doctorate on the trajectories of *favela* residents who made it to college and she explained that his knowledge on the conditions or variables that played a role in their educational success offered important insight in the evolution of her initiative, which aimed to increase college graduation rates among *favela* community members. Another leader explained that one of the individuals in his community of innovation taught him about the complex

laws on labor and NGO registration. Another leader who implemented a film school for marginalized youth had learned everything he knew about film from the founding members within his community of innovation. The limited number of examples would suggest that social entrepreneurs do not progress through some linear learning trajectory in which one person teaches another information, skills and knowledge.

### **Collaborative Innovative Learning**

Contrary to the few examples of a specific individual teaching the leaders a specific skill and relevant information (in line with acquisition models of learning), the leaders described numerous examples of learning within the context of their communities of innovation. During the interviews I asked probing questions about the evolution of the various components of the leaders' initiatives and about how the leaders and the actors in their communities of innovation learned how to execute them. What the leaders described was a learning process (not necessarily linear) of experience, reflection, change in perspective and future action. The learning process occurred among the community of innovation actors, as opposed to on the individual level. One leader explained,

We would do a project, finish it and then reflect on it – asked if we completed it well and discuss how it could grow or be different in the future and then we continue growing. If we finish a project with three courses, next time we do four, and that's how we grow.

The cyclical learning process they described aligns with processes described in literatures under the larger umbrella of the innovative learning metaphors. The focus was not on learning skills and knowledge that already existed, but more improving upon prior skills and coming up with new ideas and ways of doing things. Another element that aligned with innovative learning was the collaborative dynamic. When the leaders talked



about their learning trajectories prior to the existence of their communities of innovation, in which they described the process of learning about a specific social problem and the process of coming up with the initial innovative idea, they typically used the word “I.” However, in describing the learning process once the initiative had been conceptualized and had begun to be implemented, the leaders almost universally switched from using “I” to “we.” The pattern was so predominant across interviews that it suggested that one of the most powerful process and outcomes of the social capital among the communities of innovation was the group learning dynamic.

A common pattern among the leaders when describing the group learning process among the communities of innovation was that the cyclical learning process was usually instigated by a challenge or problem they faced in regards to implementing the initiative. The leaders in my study explained that, upon facing a challenge, the actors in the communities of innovation would discuss the problem, reflect on its cause and discuss potential ways of overcoming it. Such reflections typically took place over a series of conversations among the actors, and ultimately led to a change in perspective and change in action. The process that the social entrepreneurs described aligned with processes described in theories of innovative learning (West, 2009; Engeström, 1987, 1999; Bereiter, 2002). The change in action led to program changes, contributing to the evolution and advancement of the initiative.

One of the leader’s stories exemplified this process when describing how the key innovative component of her initiative evolved. The purpose of the initiative was to help generate income for low-income artists who worked with recycled materials by helping them access a market of middle and upper-class buyers. The leader and her business

partner noticed that sales were seasonal. During the months in which there were holidays, sales were high, but during non-holiday months their profits did not even cover overhead costs. The partners were broke and discussed on numerous occasions the problem their initiative faced and how they could overcome their financial problems. During one of the discussions, the leader came up with the idea of selling the artists' products through direct sales using a voluntary sales team and a catalogue to advertise the products. The innovative idea worked. Once implemented, sales were consistent from month to month and rose substantially.

Another noticeable pattern that emerged from the interview data was the importance that the target population played in the learning process. Leaders described how critical it was to listen to the target population, reflect as a group on their interactions with the target population, and then apply what they heard and observed to future action. Building off of the prior point that learning among the community of innovation was often instigated by a challenge that emerged during implementation, in many interviews the leaders described a challenge or problem directly involving the target population. One leader stated,

The truth is that it is not just a moment but a process – various moments and various observations that have helped us understand... For example, after visiting many times a patient with their family and observing the dynamics of this family – there was a phenomenon in which we would reproduce the patterns in the family with the patterns within the [therapy] team.... It was as if we absorbed this pattern... and although at first we thought of it as a problem--like a contamination--we realized this was actually a good opportunity to work, because if we were able to fix the conflict within our team, then we had a better chance of helping the family overcome the conflict within the family.... So this was not something that happened suddenly but it was a long process.

Another leader explained that one of their programs aimed to get drug soldiers out of the drug trade. After working with and observing former drug soldiers who had gone through the different components of the program, they noticed that many of the participants suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder related to their violent histories in the drug trade. The social entrepreneur and the actors in the community of innovation developed an additional program to help the target population process their violent histories in a healthy way, in an effort to help them integrate into mainstream society. The actors within this particular community of innovation reflected as a group over numerous conversations about the challenges they faced involving the target population and how to address them, ultimately leading to this new component of the program.

In some cases (although not as many as I would have anticipated), members of the target population were directly involved in the cyclical learning process among the community of innovation, either because actors who made up the community of innovation identified themselves as part of the target population or because the team intentionally included members of the target population in the reflective and decision making process. In the ex-drug trade soldier program just mentioned in the previous paragraph, two of the most successful work programs were created by former drug traders. One was a dog-walking business in which the former drug traders provided a dog-walking service for elite dog owners in affluent neighborhoods of Rio. The other program, which employed 51 former drug soldiers, was a party service center that could be rented out for a set fee in which the organizers provide drinks, food and music. The idea arose when one of the former drug soldiers explained to the social entrepreneur that many people in their communities liked to have parties but were afraid of violent

incidents breaking out or being assaulted on their way home from the party. Because the former drug soldiers were well-known and respected within the neighborhood, people knew that if they organized an event, a violent incident would not occur. The social entrepreneur who supported the initiatives, explained, “People said I was crazy (to support such a project) but I said why not? It’s a service people want.” Both businesses were thriving when I conducted the interview in 2009; they provided legitimate alternative incomes outside the drug trade.

Because the concept of a community of innovation emerged only after the preliminary analysis of my data, my interview questions did not focus on obtaining data on communities of innovation. Consequently, it was hard to get a sense of how frequently the target population was intentionally included in the reflective process across the 27 communities of innovation. Based on the available interview data, only a handful of leaders described explicit and intentional efforts to include the target population in the learning process with the communities of innovation. Considering how central the target population is to the social entrepreneurial process, future research on the impact of including the target population in communities of innovation could contribute invaluable research to the field of social entrepreneurship.

What is evident and relevant to my study is how learning, both on the individual (leader) and group level, took place within the context of a collective process. One of the outcomes of the social capital embedded in the communities of innovation was that both individual and group learning informed the social entrepreneurial process and the evolution of the social enterprises.

In addition to problems related to the implementation of the initiatives, other external challenges evolved that the communities had to overcome. In some cases, these challenges served as opportunities to bond the actors within the communities together. Leaders specifically spoke about the challenges of obtaining and maintaining the necessary finances to keep their projects running. For example, one of the initiatives had not formally been registered as a non-profit organization, and any external financial support was channeled to the initiative through a separate religious institution. When the leadership within this larger organization changed, so did its policies. Faced with financial problems, the umbrella religious organization decided to sell the homes that the smaller social entrepreneurial initiative had obtained through donations and used as temporary shelters for street children. The homes were pivotal to the innovative program because they allowed the street educators to have continuous contact with the street kids with whom they worked, which helped build trust and enhanced the overall effectiveness of their work. Devastated by the unexpected change in leadership and policies of the larger religious organization, they realized that they could no longer rely on the institution as a mediator of their finances. The network of actors who had originally began the initiative, along with a handful of employees, who previous were street children but had gotten off the streets partially with the help of the initiative, got together to discuss if and how to move forward. Despite their financial losses, they decided to continue their work by forming a new and independent organization to be officially registered as a non-profit organization. Because they did not have funding during the early stages of setting up this new organization, the founders and employees worked as volunteers until they obtained the necessary financial resources to restore the prior paid

positions. Although the new organization is not as big in terms of the number of target population they serve and does not have the same amount of resources as the prior initiative, the leader explained to me that he and his team had learned from their prior experiences, which inform their current work practices.

Financial challenges came up across interviews with the social entrepreneurs. In a number of cases, like the one described above, the financial hardships encouraged the actors within the communities to discuss the challenges as a group and work more interdependently together, ultimately enhancing the cohesiveness of the group. As will be discussed in more detail in the next section, some communities of innovation overcame financial challenges by pooling their individual resources together. In other cases, the leaders described how their programs at times evolved based partially on external factors such as funding issues. Regardless of the approach, it seemed that the mutually shared belief in the importance of the communities' work overshadowed the financial difficulties they faced.

### **Other Forms of Capital**

Bourdieu (1985) postulated that the amount of social capital a person has depends on the potential resources embedded in the network and the volume of other forms of capital associated with that network. The data from the interviews highlights how the social capital embedded in the relationships with the actors in the communities of innovation converted into other forms of valuable capital. Specifically, the individuals who made up the community of innovation led to financial and symbolic capital, and had social ties to actors that led to additional social capital.

In terms of financial capital, the people who made up the community of innovation either financially contributed to the evolution of the initiative or had social connections to other actors that led to financial resources. One leader stated,

I never would have been able to [start the Institute] alone because all of us invested a lot of our own personal money to start the institute in order to have it functioning and we divided the costs among us.

Actors within eight of the communities of innovation contributed financially to the birth of the initiative. In other instances, actors within the community of innovation had connections to people who ultimately provided funding for the social entrepreneurial project (a form of bridging capital). Leaders also described how the actors within the implementation network wrote up funding proposals that ultimately led to financial support for the initiative. Finally, community of innovation actors had access to physical resources, which translated into financial savings since the initiative did not have to cover such costs. For example, one leader explained that one of the individuals in the community of innovation owned a house, which they used as the home base for their initiative at no cost.

In a number of instances, the actors in the communities of innovation had symbolic capital. Several of the actors across the communities of innovation were involved or had been involved in politics and had access to politicians. In other cases, actors were connected to the university, and therefore were considered legitimate in terms of expertise because of their educational credentials. Other actors were well-known and respected in the hip-hop world, which opened up important opportunities for them.

The actors who made up the community of innovation were embedded in their own networks, and served as a bridge tie to other networks. Such bridge ties enhanced the

overall social networks of the initiative and therefore augmented the potential social capital embedded in these networks. I already mentioned, for example, how individuals within the communities of innovation knew actors connected to funding. Other examples that featured across interviews included connections to actors within the media, which led to important publicity of the initiative, connections to actors with the necessary legal background to file the paperwork to achieve official NGO status, and access to a larger network of the target population.

In all of the instances, resources embedded in the social relations among the actors in the communities of innovation added to the overall accumulation of resources among the communities of innovation. The outcome of utilizing this social capital was the ability to complete tasks involved in the implementation of social entrepreneurship. Such a dynamic highlights that the process was not based on the one individual (the social entrepreneurial leader), but instead was a culmination of a group of actors, the resources embedded in those relationships, and their collective action.

### **Conclusion**

A considerable body of social entrepreneurial literature exists that uses an individualist model and assumes that social entrepreneurs have a set of innate characteristics that set them apart from other types of leaders (Dees, 1998; Bornstein, 2004; De Leeuw, 1999; Henton et al., 1997). One overarching argument of my study is that innate characteristics do not adequately explain how social entrepreneurs take on their leadership role. The purpose of this chapter was to demonstrate how social capital



not only played an important role in the learning trajectory of the leaders, but also in the social entrepreneurial process. The specific questions that I aimed to address were: What social networks do social entrepreneurs have access to and what social capital embedded in these networks do they rely upon to learn the skills and knowledge necessary to take on the role of social entrepreneurs? What is the interplay between this social capital and taking on the role of a social entrepreneur? The chapter aimed to contribute to recent literature on social entrepreneurship that is moving away from an individualist model and instead is examining it as a social process (Mair, 2010; Brock, 2008; Zahara et al., 2009).

There are several central findings that speak to my research questions. First, the experiences that leaders referred to in the previous chapter were important in terms of gaining access and initially meeting a number of individuals who proved to be invaluable in the social entrepreneurial process. Specifically, they met members of the target population and individuals that eventually made up networks of actors whom I refer to as communities of innovation. Cultivating relationships with these social actors helped leaders build up “social credits” (Nelson, 2010). Accessing social capital within these relationships played a pivotal role in the learning trajectories of the leaders, as well as the social entrepreneurial process in general. Leaders had in-depth interactions over an extended period of time with the target population (which speaks to structural aspects that affect social capital). The leaders described non-authoritarian interactions, in which the well-being of the individual(s) target population member(s) was a primary focus. They referred to the target population as the most important group in terms of understanding social problems and conceptualizing their initiatives (an important outcome of the social capital embedded in relationships with the target population). Listening to and reflecting

on what the target population had to say was a central component of the learning process. They also played a pivotal role during the implementation and expansion stages of the initiatives. For example, one form of social capital that evolved over time was trust, which ultimately led to the participation and expansion of the target population in the leaders' initiatives. My findings suggest that future social entrepreneurs should invest in long-term social relations with individuals considered to be the target population of whatever social issue is of importance to them.

The second opportunity of social capital that I focused on was embedded in a network of actors called a community of innovation. While some actors came and went within this community during different stages of social entrepreneurship, the bulk of social actors remained, ultimately forming a dense network of actors, who interacted on a consistent basis over an extended period of time in an interdependent and non-hierarchical manner. There were a number of important outcomes of accessing the social capital embedded in this network. First, my data demonstrates that, while the leaders might have come up with the preliminary ideas for their initiatives, the actors within the communities of innovation came up with the specifics for their ideas. In a number of cases, the ideas evolved out of numerous conversations among the actors in the community. All of the actors had the opportunity to contribute to the conversation, and their collective active participation fostered a sense of investment and mutual vision among the community players. The actors who made up the communities of innovation also played critical roles in the implementation of the initiatives. Once the initiative was implemented, learning took place within a group context. A cyclical learning process of action (implementation of the initiative), group reflection (specifically on what was and

wasn't working), new perspectives based on this group reflective process, and new group action (improved implementation) occurred. This cyclical learning process informed the social entrepreneurs in my study and it influenced the subsequent collective actions of the community of innovators. Hence, the collaborative learning process among the actors played an integral role in the evolution of the social entrepreneurial process. The processes described by the social entrepreneurs in my study aligned with literature focused on innovative learning. The focus of the dense networks of actors was not on acquiring knowledge and skills that already existed, or learning how to become an expert in a certain profession (like a significant bulk of participatory learning literature), but instead on improving upon approaches and advancing knowledge.

In the introduction of this chapter, I mentioned that the concept of communities of innovation typically has been applied to research grounded in the for-profit sector. Applying the concept to research focused on social change versus profit-making-provided a new context or opportunity to further develop the concept. Something that was unique about the communities of innovation in my study was that, in their efforts to address social problems that most negatively affect traditionally marginalized populations, social entrepreneurs tended to engage in critical reflective processes, which placed issues of power dynamics more centrally in their discussions. Educators committed to fostering social entrepreneurship should introduce future leaders to methodologies of critical reflection.

Considering how prevalent a network of actors was in the conceptualization and implementation of innovative social initiatives, my findings question the current trend of crediting individual social entrepreneurs with developing innovative ideas. For example,

philanthropic organizations such as Ashoka seek out individuals whose innovative social ideas have the potential for large-scale impact. Instead of funding individuals, supporting groups of innovative change agents might be more productive. The conceptualization of a community of innovation serves as a model to make sense of the social structures and processes conducive to innovative learning. Encouraging and investing in the formation of social capital within communities of innovation can potentially lead to more effective collective efforts, which in this case take the form of collaborative social innovation.

## Chapter VII

### CONCLUSION

#### Introduction

My study evolved out of an interest in understanding how social entrepreneurs learned to take on their leadership role of addressing the root causes of social problems through innovative initiatives. In recent years the field of social entrepreneurship has focused its attention on fostering future leaders who are working on systemic transformative change through pioneering initiatives. My study contributes to this body of research by highlighting the importance of experiences and social capital in the learning trajectories of such leaders and in assuming a social entrepreneurial role.

One of the primary contributions of my study speaks to the debate within the field about whether social entrepreneurs possess innate characteristics conducive to leadership or if these leadership abilities can be learned. A stream of earlier literature encompassed an individualist lens aimed at understanding attributes, behaviors, and innate characteristics conducive to social entrepreneurship (Bornstein, 1998; De Leeuw, 1999; Henton et al., 1997; Sullivan Mort et al., 2003). On the other end of the debate are scholars who believe that skills and knowledge necessary to take on the role of a social entrepreneur can be learned (Young, 1997; Catford, 1998; Zadek and Thake, 1997), and that social entrepreneurship must be understood as a social process, as opposed to a handful of abilities possessed by an individual (Brock, 2008; Mair and Marti, 2006;

Zahara et al., 2009). Recent studies embracing this standpoint have provided scholars and practitioners a wide range of data, offering insights into the process through which and the social contexts in which social entrepreneurship evolves. My study adds to this body of literature, providing a more nuanced understanding of the learning trajectories of social entrepreneurs. The overarching research questions of the study aimed to answer:

1. What types of experiences do social entrepreneurs have access to and rely upon to learn the skills and knowledge necessary to take on the role of social entrepreneur? What is the interplay between the experiences and their capacity to take on this role?
2. What social capital do social entrepreneurs have access to and rely upon to take on the role of a social entrepreneur? What is the interplay between their social capital and their capacity to take on the role of a social entrepreneur?

While chapter V and VI described the data findings, respectively focused on experiences and social capital, the next section will delve into the analysis of the findings, including practical and theoretical implications and recommendations for future research.

### **Question 1: The Interplay of Learning Experiences and Taking on the Role of a Social Entrepreneur**

#### **Continuity of Experiences**

Across interviews, the leaders in my study talked about the importance of learning

from experiences. This finding is important because it confirms that actors are not simply born with leadership abilities, but in fact can and do learn skills and knowledge that inform them once assuming the role of a social entrepreneur (Young, 1997; Catford, 1998; Zadek and Thake, 1997). While previous literature in the field of social entrepreneurship postulated that social entrepreneurs draw from diverse experiences (Bornstein, 2007) the literature did not analyze which kinds of experiences or how these experiences informed their work as a social entrepreneur. The findings in my study revealed a convergence in the following experiences: direct experience with inequality, interaction with actors most negatively affected by social problems, volunteer work, activism, the influence of religious institutions, formal education, professional experience, reading and international interactions. The data demonstrated that experiences built upon one another on a cognitive level; the leaders described how the aforementioned experiences in some way changed their perspectives, assumptions, and understanding of their surroundings, which informed future experiences. A culmination of experiences in which the leaders made cognitive connections among the experiences facilitated their awareness of and offered a more complex understanding of certain social problems. For example, one of the leaders described how he volunteered in a prison and learned about social factors that played a role in this path to prison life. Based on this volunteer experience, he decided that if he wanted to have any influence on potentially deterring at-risk populations from an avenue of delinquency, then he must work with individuals at a younger age. He got a job as an educator within the juvenile defense system. After interacting with youth within the system, he realized that for many, the social conditions, which shaped their trajectories of criminality, started at an even

younger age and on the streets. Based on this experience, he decided to work with street children.

This concept of a continuity of experiences is not a new one. Dewey (1938), for example, wrote about the experiential continuum. He argued that experiences built off of one another and influenced in some way the quality of future experiences. Accordingly, Dewey believed that education should aim to build upon what has already been learnt during prior stages of learning.<sup>40</sup> Since Dewey, much has been written on how adults learn through experiences (Kolb, 1983; Smith, 1990; Merriam et al., 2007). Specifically, adult education literature has offered insight into the importance of reflecting on experiences in order to inform future experiences. As stated by Mezirow (1991), "... reflection can play a role in thoughtful action by allowing us to assess consciously what we know about taking the next step in a series of actions and consider whether we will be 'on course' in doing so." In other words, reflection can lead to reflective action, which entails "making decisions or taking other action predicated upon the insights resulting from reflection..." (p. 117). My research supports the important role that reflection can play in making connections across experiences. Across interviews, the leaders described a reflective process that aligned with the cyclical learning cycle described extensively in adult learning literature (Kolb, 1983; Brookfield, 1991; Mezirow, 1991; Cope, 2003). Specifically, the leaders had a variety of experiences, which led to a more complex understanding of social problems. Reflecting on what they observed played a key role in making connections from one experience to another and informing future action. The

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<sup>40</sup> Dewey did not believe that a series of experiences, or a "continuity of experience," alone signified educative potential. He argued that experience had no significance until given meaning for subsequent experience. Thus, he emphasized the "experiential continuum" for its educative potential (1938).



participants also described how diverse experiences culminated, in a non-linear way, in the initial idea for a transformative social project. Understanding how they learned to conceptualize a social problem added insight into how they came up with an idea to overcome the problems.

### **Critical Reflection**

The social entrepreneurs in my study described how certain experiences, such as participation in activism, formal education, and volunteer work sponsored by a liberal branch of the Catholic Church, contributed to their social formation by offering a lens to help the leaders make sense of the social problems that they were observing and/or experiencing. Typically these experiences entailed a critically reflective component. For example, the leaders described how during student activist meetings, they critically reflected on hegemonic assumptions and processes and strategies to overcome oppressive systems. The findings in my study align with prior literature, which describes critical reflection as a tool or method to analyze and understand how social processes benefit some groups at the expense of others. As outlined by Stephen Brookfield (1995), critical reflection encourages learners to question and reframe culturally-based assumptions that have been accepted as “truths”, explore alternative perspectives on previously “taken for granted” ideas, behaviors, and ideologies, and learn to recognize the hegemonic components of dominant cultural values. Emancipatory learning spheres grapple with questions such as: In what ways do power dynamics play out in day-to-day interactions, institutions, and cultural practices, and what are their consequences? The aforementioned questions are relevant to social entrepreneurship since social entrepreneurs are ultimately

aiming to instigate systemic social change due to current social and economic arrangements that are creating social imbalances (Mair 2010). In order to come up with alternative systemic ideas, it is necessary to first question the “status quo” and acknowledge the shortcomings of current social processes, systems and institutions.

In adult education, experiential learning with a critical reflective component is ultimately aimed at encouraging social action (Fenwick, 2003). Understanding experiences that lead to a desire to instigate social change is relevant to the field of social entrepreneurship since something that distinguishes social entrepreneurs from other types of entrepreneurs is the emphasis on making a positive social difference. Little, however, has been written on what encourages social entrepreneurs to care about social issues. The leaders in my study described key experiences that played a pivotal role in developing a framework to make sense of social problems in such a way that contributed to their desire to do something about them. The culmination of the aforementioned experiences shaped the leaders’ understanding of social problems and desire to want to intervene in social problems and work toward changing the “status quo.” Pivotal to this story, experiences tended to involve those most negatively affected by social problems over an extended period of time (and in such a way that offered a window into the lived consequences of social problems), and some experiences entailed a critical reflective component. Stated differently, critical reflection on a series of experiences contributed to the sociopolitical consciousness of the social entrepreneurs in my study and a desire to engage in social action. Understanding why social entrepreneurs care about social problems is important because as Mair (2010) states, a sense of social responsibility among leaders of private

and non-profit enterprises could lead to action that would potentially decrease the existence of such social issues in the future

### **Social Context Matters**

#### **Series of Social Learning Experiences**

Continuity of experiences did not just occur on a cognitive level as described above, but also in a socially contextualized way. The informants described how a prior experience often opened up opportunities to new experiences. The social entrepreneurs in my study described how one experience led to another, leading to a series of experiences that built upon one another. This series of experiences had nothing to do with what was going on inside the leaders' heads but was a socially situated phenomena. The finding highlights how access to experiences is influenced by prior experiences and the social world in which the social entrepreneurs are embedded.

#### **Social Actors Involved in Learning Experiences**

The actors with whom the leaders interacted influenced the experiences that the leaders described. Had the specific actors who made up the experiences not been involved, the learning experience would have taken a different shape. My findings also revealed that prior experiences were important in the learning trajectories of social entrepreneurs because some of the people, who they met through previous experiences ended up playing a critical role later in the process of conceptualizing and implementing their innovative initiatives. Stated differently, the leaders' prior experiences opened up important social networks in relation to their social entrepreneurial work. Meeting people from diverse social circles and backgrounds, but with similar values and goals to instigate social change was an important factor in the social entrepreneurial process.

### **Historical, Structural and Institutional Context**

Like any social phenomena, it is important to situate my findings in a historical, structural and institutional context. Expanding out from the immediate social worlds of the social entrepreneurs, certain social structures and institutions shaped the experiences that the leaders described. For example, the leaders were situated in one of the most unequal cities in the world in terms of distribution of wealth. In Rio de Janeiro physical space is segregated by class, which played a role in facilitating and constraining the learning experiences of the leaders. One of the social institutions that has been attributed to reproducing socioeconomic stratification in Brazil is the education system. Overall the social entrepreneurs in my study were a highly educated group of individuals relative to Brazil's overall population. Of the social entrepreneurs in my study, who came from financially disadvantaged backgrounds but reached high levels of educational attainment, they alluded that their educational trajectories were not common among their family and friends (and in many cases there were a handful of nuanced factors that contributed to their educational trajectories). They believed their education was an important factor in their social entrepreneurial path in terms of obtaining legitimacy and relevant knowledge within their field of expertise.

All of the leaders in my study described, either implicitly or explicitly, how historical circumstances affected their learning experiences. For example, the leaders described that social movements evolved that opposed Brazil's military regime from the 1960s and 1980s. During this period, Brazilians had unprecedented opportunities to be exposed to and involved in social and political activism. The leaders in my study who

participated in the social movements of this era described them as pivotal in their social learning and social formation. My findings suggest that involvement in social activism is an experience that potentially plays an important role in the social formation of future social entrepreneurs. Social movements since Brazil reinstituted political democracy have shifted stance from opposing the State to working with governmental institutions. This shift in political and social activist rhetoric inevitably impacts the social formation of participants and it would be fruitful to study the repercussions of this shift, particularly the ways in which participants engage in future social action based on what they learned in said social movements.

An institution that played a key role in social movements in Brazil was the leftist branch of the Catholic Church, one of the only institutions not infiltrated by the military regime. Further, Brazil was central to the development of an activist branch of the Church informed by liberation theology (Boff, 1987; Burdick, 1996; Nagle, 1997). The influence of the leftist Church on the social formation of the leaders in my study, particularly during the military regime era, surfaced a number of times in the interviews. My findings adhere to prior literature, which points out that in many Latin American countries, the Catholic Church has played a critical role in encouraging informal entrepreneurial approaches to social problems (Mair, (2010). However, regional specificity and context should be considered when thinking about the generalizability of the Church's influence on the social formation of social entrepreneurial leaders around the globe, for a few reasons. First, the Church is divided on its perspective and involvement in leftist social movements. Also, as Janice Perlman (2010) and John Burdick (1996) have documented, the influence of the Church is decreasing in modern Brazil, as new Protestant

organizations emerge and more Brazilians remain unaffiliated religiously. It will be interesting to see the repercussions of this shift in Brazil, and whether the Church's influence on the social formation of actors at the local level will be replaced by another institution.

## **Practical Implications**

### **Encourage Social Entrepreneurs to Reflect on Experiences**

Based on the findings of my study, educators in the field of social entrepreneurship should encourage aspiring innovative learners to reflect on prior experiences in order to make connections among their experiences with the aim of informing future action. This reflective process is particularly important in regards to building a more complex understanding of social problems; the way such social problems are understood will inform the conceptualization of how to overcome these problems. As a starting point, simply allocating time and space during formal social entrepreneurial training programs for participants to reflect on prior experiences that led them to want to pursue a path of social entrepreneurship can help maximize learning benefits. There are numerous activities aimed at encouraging learners to reflect on their prior experiences for a more profound cumulative learning experience (Komives & Wagner, 2009; Jacobson & Ruddy, 2004; Boud et al., 1985). For example, autobiographical journaling about prior experiences with guided questions has been a popular tool for reflection (Powell, J.P., 1985; Walker, 1985; College of Occupational Therapist, 2006). Debriefing in groups can also be a powerful form of debriefing, and is particularly relevant considering the importance of collaboration in social entrepreneurship. Another activity to encourage reflection is to ask participants to draw a time line, diagram (Candy et al., 1985) or some

other graphic tool that visually represents a handful of experiences that they think are relevant and connected to a particular theme (in this case, perhaps it would be about how they first learned about a particular social problem they are concerned about and hope to address through innovative initiatives). The diagram or timeline is meant as a tool to assist the learner in making connections between relevant experiences and to get them to think about what the experiences meant, how they are connected, and what they learned from them. Guiding questions can be as simple as asking participants to think about a social issue they are concerned about and to think about the first time they became aware of this particular social problem. What was happening in their lives when they became aware of it and how did they make sense of it? How did they feel when they became aware of the social problem? At that time, why did they think the social problem existed, or what did they perceive as the cause of the problem? What did they learn from the experience that brought awareness of the problem? What actions did they take in response to the learning experience? For each experience represented in the diagram, the learner would repeat the series of questions, as well as how, if at all, the experiences were connected or built upon, and how he/she can use what he/she learned toward future action? The aim, in this case, would be to help aspiring social entrepreneurs make connections between their experiences for a more profound understanding of social problems that they are attempting to overcome.

Regardless of the methods, approaches or tools used to encourage reflection, some key principles are important in order to enhance learning benefits (Boud et al., 1985). First, the reflective process should be grounded in learners' interests and needs, and not driven by the facilitators' agenda. Second, the reflective process should be geared

toward how insights can be utilized for future action. In the Social Entrepreneurship Collaboratory at Harvard and Stanford Universities (SE) Lab, for example, students are asked to partake in a series of reflective processes aimed at helping them think about the social issues that they find compelling, prior experiences that have influenced their interests in said issues, and how to translate their concerns into action (Bloom, 2006). I argue that incorporating a reflective component into a formal social entrepreneurial training program is not only helpful for understanding how prior experiences have conditioned the perceptions of current perspectives, but also for simply alerting aspiring social entrepreneurs to the practice of reflection- to encourage them to partake in reflective processes in the future, which can potentially inform their subsequent work and actions.

### **Encourage Involvement in Volunteer Work and Social Activism with a Critically Reflective Component**

The findings of my study imply that practitioners interested in fostering future social entrepreneurs should encourage the next generation to engage in activities such as volunteer work and social activism, which potentially foster social awareness and social empathy. My findings support prior research regarding the value of service learning in terms of enhancing a sense of social responsibility (Astin et al., 2000; Komives & Wagner, 2009). Based on the descriptions of volunteer experiences by the participants in my study, which aligned with earlier volunteer literature (Moore & Allen, 1998; Omoto & Snyder, 1990), there are a number of lessons we can extract on how to enhance a positive volunteer experience such that it is meaningful to the volunteer. First, volunteer work that places participants in settings where they see firsthand the lived consequences



of social problems among traditionally marginalized population is particularly fruitful for awakening social awareness and a desire to address certain social problems. Also, an experience in which the volunteer feels that he or she connects with other volunteers and is given responsibility along with some degree of autonomy over how the volunteer experience pans out seems to enhance the meaningfulness of the volunteer experience (Moore & Allen, 1998). Accordingly, organizations that rely on volunteers should include activities that foster relationship development among volunteers and should allow volunteers some degree of agency over the volunteer process.

Volunteers generally gravitate toward service roles that speak to their personal motivations (Moore & Allen, 1998). Aspiring volunteers, therefore, should seek out organizations or volunteer opportunities that align with an issue or concern that is important to them. While some voluntary tasks might be important, the actual work can be tedious and/or may not feel like the work is making a noticeable impact. For example, one of the leaders in my study initially volunteered at a non-profit organization dedicated to violence prevention, but was quickly disheartened when his primary task was to alphabetize the texts in the organization's library. He almost quit, but decided to continue volunteering only after switching tasks so that he was working directly with youth in high conflict areas. Drawing from this lesson, potential volunteers should think about the nature of work or type of tasks that they will be asked to do at a specific organization, and if such tasks will feel engaging or meaningful to them. Volunteers who feel that their work contributed in some positive way to society tend to be encouraged to do something positive in the future (The Volunteer Center, 2012). Providing a variety of volunteer opportunities intended to gratify the primary reasons individuals give for volunteering

could enhance the positive effects of volunteering.

My findings infer that involvement in social activism is a potentially powerful learning experience for future social entrepreneurs. Since social activism focuses on addressing political and social injustices through collective action, future generations of social entrepreneurs can learn important lessons from involvement in activist work. To be specific, social activism utilizes a multitude of strategies, such as mobilizing people, negotiation, critical thinking in a collaborative setting (which is discussed in more detail below), and acts of resistance aimed at instigating transformative change. All of the aforementioned strategies can inform social entrepreneurial work (Andrews, 2001).

Many of the lessons learned on how to heighten the meaningfulness of a volunteer experience can be applied to involvement in social movements and social activism. Individuals interested in participating in social movements or activism should find opportunities that revolve around social issues of significance to them. As much as possible, individuals should take an active role, which fosters a sense of ownership and encourages further investment in a cause (Lewis-Charp et al., 2006). Just like volunteer work, there are a variety of forms of activism that entail diverse tasks, such as participating in a march, attending activist meetings, partaking in teach-ins, or working on a Web site dedicated to a certain cause (Martin, B., 2007). Social activist participants should look for undertakings that they find enjoyable.

Prior activism research suggests that when participants become heavily involved in activist activities within a short period of time, they tend to burnout or are forced to step away due to other commitments (Martin, B., 2007). Participants should think carefully about how much time they are able to commit in light of other responsibilities.

For those already involved in activism and looking to recruit additional activists, orchestrating activities that accommodate different levels of time commitments can augment their potential participant pool.

Mentorship can be an effective way of ensuring that new participants feel welcome, and it can foster learning. I had described in Chapter VI how one of the leaders in my study joined an activist group, and was initially confused by their dialogue because he was not familiar with the philosophies and political terms they used. The person who invited him to the political group took the leader under his wing, explaining political terms and giving him reading material that would facilitate his understanding of political terms. He described how the mentor played an important role in his political learning trajectory.

To further make meaning of experiences such as volunteer work and social activism, educators should encourage participants to reflect on the relevance of their experiences in relation to potential future social entrepreneurial actions. Questions related to volunteer work and social activism could focus on what social needs have been neglected that their volunteer and activist work is attempting to address and the processes or factors that led to the manifestation of these social issues. Further, educators should encourage participants to ask critically reflective questions, which examine how inequalities of power are reinforced in social processes and institutions.

## **Question 2: The Interplay of Social Capital and Taking on the Role of a Social Entrepreneur**

### **Social Capital and the Target Population**

In Chapter VI, I examined the social capital embedded in the social relations with the leaders' target population and actors within their communities of innovation. The outcomes of social capital embedded in relationships with the target population proved to be invaluable to the leaders in at least four ways. First, the leaders said that the target population was the most important actor in terms of informing them about a social problem or series of problems and inspiring the preliminary idea of an initiative. Support from the target population was essential once the idea was initiated, as their participation in the various social enterprises was mandatory for the projects to take root. Further, social ties with actors considered to be the target population proved to be important for opening up larger networks to the target population. These bridging ties ultimately contributed to the evolution and scaling up of social enterprises. Finally, interaction with this particular group through the process of social entrepreneurship was imperative to the leader's continuous learning trajectory.

Prior to beginning the social entrepreneurial initiatives, the leaders had had in-depth interactions with the target population over an extended period of time. More than half of the social entrepreneurs had had at least 11 years of contact and 70% reported having daily contact with the target population prior to beginning their initiatives. This interaction continued once they implemented their initiatives. Consistent contact and nurturing interactions between the leaders and the target population enhanced trust over time. For example, one of the leaders described how he gained the trust of a group of

street kids only after months of weekly soccer gatherings where he and fellow street educators brought food, soda, and listened attentively to the youth whenever they wanted to talk. We can infer from the data, therefore, that long-term positive interactions with the target population are critical to the social entrepreneurial learning process. This runs counter to current mainstream trends in the field of social entrepreneurship, which advocate that passion and an innovative idea are enough to realize a social entrepreneurial initiative. For example, in their “cheat sheet” for social entrepreneurs, Durieux and Stebbin (2010) suggest five steps to turn one’s “compassion,” “drive” and innovative idea into a “successful for-profit or nonprofit enterprise.” Not one of their steps includes interaction with the intended beneficiaries. More broadly, non-profit organizations have been criticized for not adequately connecting to the communities they intend to support, weakening their efficacy (Lafuente, 2005).

Once the leaders’ initiatives had been implemented, continuous interaction with the target population followed by reflection helped keep the leaders connected to this group of key stakeholders. This connection minimized the potential of top-down processes that might further exacerbate social exclusion and disempowerment.

### **Social Capital and Communities of Innovation**

My data illuminated the fact that although the social entrepreneurs might have come up with the preliminary ideas for innovative initiatives, it was a group of individuals that contributed to the conceptualization and implementation of them. In fact, all of the leaders referred to a specific group of actors as absolutely essential in contributing to the conceptualization of their initial ideas and their implementation. This

finding is important, as it runs counter to prior case studies on social entrepreneurship that credited a single leader with coming up with and conceptualizing an innovative idea (Bornstein, 2007). It also supports literature that advocates examining social entrepreneurship as a social process as opposed to an individual model (Fayolle & Matlay, 2010). But what does this social process look like, and how can we make sense of it?

All 27 leaders described a network of actors, that had multiple social ties with one another, and that helped with the conceptualization and implementation of their initiatives. The majority of the networks were made up of three or more individuals, who typically had diverse areas of expertise and/or offered resources distinct from those obtained by the social entrepreneurs. Most of the actors in the networks, described by the leaders, volunteered their time during the conceptualization and initial implementation stages, which suggests that they were motivated by a mutual belief in the importance of their work and a commitment to addressing certain social issues. In terms of how innovative ideas initially evolved, the social entrepreneurs described a process in which they got together with the other actors in the aforementioned networks and through a series of conversations discussed social problems about which they were concerned. The conversations often critically questioned and analyzed root causes of the problems, as well as ways to overcome them. In a number of cases, innovative project ideas evolved out of these group conversations. In other cases individual actors within the networks came up with innovative components of the social enterprises.

The social entrepreneurs described how the majority (although not all) of the individuals in the dense networks, who helped conceptualize the innovative ideas, also

contributed to the initial implementation and evolution of the social enterprises. Among other forms of support, the network of actors completed tasks that contributed to the realization of the social enterprises, they provided emotional support to the leaders, which encouraged them to keep working despite difficult challenges, solidarity among the actors in the network led to collective action, and actors in the networks provided resources such as financial capital, which contributed to the sustainability and expansion of the social entrepreneurial enterprises. Finally, the leaders described that once their initiatives had been conceptualized and implemented, collaborative and innovative learning happened among their network of innovators based off of experiences with the initiative and a group reflective process that involved the aforementioned network of actors. The outcome of this reflective process often led to new innovations and changes aimed at improving and building upon already existing social entrepreneurial projects.

### **The Intersection of Social Entrepreneurship, Social Capital and Communities of Innovation**

During the analysis stage of my study, I merged literatures from social entrepreneurship, social capital and communities of innovation to make sense of my findings. Uniting these literatures proved useful in understanding social entrepreneurship as a social process, as each body of literature informed the others in unique and interesting ways. Social capital literature, for example, highlighted the fact that the structure of relations in which the social entrepreneurs were embedded influenced their actions as leaders. Literature on social capital suggests that the social structure of a dense network in which the leaders were embedded (described above) was conducive to developing trust, which ultimately facilitated the leaders' capacity to take on collective

action (Putnam, 1993). In the context of social entrepreneurship, “collective action” entailed coming up with innovative ideas aimed at addressing social problems and implementing initiatives aimed at overcoming them. Further, social capital theory suggests that social networks organized horizontally (and not-hierarchically) also facilitate group cooperation, which makes collective action more effective. The communities of innovation described by the leaders in my study tended to encourage horizontal interactions.

The communities of innovation literature informed the analysis of my findings by offering a model to understand how innovation occurred through collaborative processes. As previously discussed, a community of innovation is defined as a network of actors that focuses on the creation and support of innovative ideas, concepts and products (Grimaldi & Rogo, 2009; Schloen, 2005). A community of innovation typically is made up of a dense network of actors, who bring diverse resources and areas of expertise to the table. Members of the community engaged in interdependent processes of inquiry, reflection, innovation through collaborative creations, new visions and implementation (West, 2009). My data resonated strongly with the collaborative processes outlined in West’s (2009) model of a community of innovation, so much so that I referred to the networks of actors, who helped with the conceptualization and implementation of the leaders’ ideas as communities of innovation. I advocate that the concept of a community of innovation be used as a conceptual framework in future studies aimed at further understanding how the processes of innovation occur within the field of social entrepreneurship.

The communities of innovation in my study differed from those described in prior literature (typically grounded in the economic sector) because the networks were focused



on addressing specific social problems having the biggest impact on marginalized populations. As such, the actors in the communities of innovation tended to engage in critical reflection to deconstruct the social processes that marginalize certain groups, with the ultimate aim of envisioning new ways of doing things in a more inclusive and democratic manner. This insight suggests that methods of critical reflection can potentially inform and be infused into innovative learning models geared toward social justice.

As previously mentioned, an important finding in my study was that the actors in the social entrepreneur's communities of innovation had distinct areas of expertise and offered diverse resources to the collective group. This finding resonated in distinct but complimentary ways across the three literatures that I merged in my study. Case in point, organizations renowned for advancing social entrepreneurship, such as Ashoka and The Skoll Foundation, advocate for reaching out to persons with diverse skills and information to maximize efforts. Literature focused on communities of innovation also advocates bringing together individuals with diverse backgrounds (West, 2009). For example, the concept of "innoversity" coined by Justesen (2004) describes how diversity within a group or community enhances innovation. Research grounded in social network and social capital offered insight into how to augment access to actors with diverse areas of expertise and resources. Granovetter (1983), for example, postulated that individuals who circulate among many different social worlds are more likely to have a wide circle of friends and acquaintances. Such a person, who has a "foot in so many worlds," has the potential of bringing people from these diverse circles together. The interview data in my study illuminated the importance of being involved in a variety of diverse activities and

social circles, which opened up access to diverse social actors for the leaders. For example, many of the leaders in my study described an eclectic number of social domains in which they were immersed and the people in these distinct circles who participated in their social entrepreneurial enterprise often brought diverse information and skills relative to the other actors in the community of innovation.

While the leaders in my study described how they were embedded in a dense network of actors and that these networks played a pivotal role in the initial evolution of their innovative ideas, suggesting that my findings aligned with the conceptual framework of a community of innovation, one might ask, when does a group of actors constitute a community of innovation? Are there concrete indicators? Prior scholars have attempted to operationalize the concept (West, 2009). In my study I cannot offer a set criterion or definitive moment when the network of actors described by the leaders could be considered a community of innovation, nor is it my intention to use the concept in such a way. Instead, I have used the term more as a conceptual scaffold to explore and better understand collaborative processes that not only encourage developing a shared innovative idea or concept, but also a collaborative idea that leads to innovative actions for positive social change. While there were certain underlying principles and occurrences described by the leaders in my study that aligned with prior literature on communities of innovation, not all features outlined in prior innovation models needed to be involved in the case studies to be considered a community of innovation. Instead, I understood these patterned features (previously described) as guiding principles regarding innovative learning, but they did not necessitate precise combinations of features described in prior literature on communities of innovation.

I also wish to clarify that, while there was a persistent pattern in my study of a dense network of actors in which the leaders were embedded that led to the implementation of their innovative social initiatives, it is important to point out that the leaders and the actors, who made up the communities of innovation, interacted with numerous other actors, who also played an important role in the evolution of the initiative. In other words, the dense networks that I focus on in my dissertation were a small but vital component of a larger social process that constituted social entrepreneurship. The importance of other social interactions and relations in the social entrepreneurial process should not be undermined. However, due to time limitations, I hone in on the social processes within this specific dense network of innovators described by the leaders.

In sum, I argue that the intersection of community of innovation and social capital literatures provided a constructive lens for analyzing some of the social processes that make up social entrepreneurship. While communities of innovation literature is useful to the field of social entrepreneurship in terms of providing insight into how innovative learning occurs through collaboration, I also believe that social entrepreneurship can inform communities of innovation. Typically, literature on communities of innovation has been grounded in the economic sector, with a focus on creating products, ideas or concepts that will augment productivity and lead to more profitable financial results. The communities of innovation in my study, however, were dedicated to creating innovative ideas, projects and movements to address some of society's most dire social problems. In addition to engaging in the collaborative and innovative learning processes outlined in the communities of innovation literature (collaborative inquiry, reflection, innovation

through collaborative processes, etc.) they also engaged in a critical reflective process that questioned social problems and the processes that led to them. Future studies on how this critical reflective process plays a role in the innovative collaborative process within communities of innovation could add invaluable insight into how to innovate in a socially responsible way. Also, the conceptualization of a community of innovation is still very new, with unanswered questions that require future research. According to West (2009), questions pertaining to the nature of communities of innovation would “benefit from developing thick case studies of actual communities of innovation” (p. 327).

Communities of innovation involved in social entrepreneurship, similar to the ones in my study, serve as an excellent opportunity for case studies to further develop its conceptualization.

### **Practical Implications**

#### **Develop Social Relations with the Target Population (Potential Collaborators)**

Future social entrepreneurs should invest in relationships with the target population prior to the initiation of a social enterprise, during its development and once the initiative has been implemented. Further, future social entrepreneurs should interact in ways that are non-hierarchical and that aim to instill trust within the target population. My study suggests that trust evolved through consistent interaction over an extended period of time. The social entrepreneurs in my study proved that they were dependable and that they were invested in the well-being of the target population, which built up trust. They demonstrated their concern for the target population in a number of ways,

including listening to the target population, engaging in non-authoritarian interactions, and whenever possible offering resources and support to address unmet needs.

In an effort to help future social entrepreneurs develop communication skills that foster non-hierarchical interactions, there are a number of techniques grounded in critical pedagogy that can be taught in social entrepreneurial programs. Such techniques aim to even out power dynamics between aspiring innovative leaders and historically marginalized populations (DeWees & Klees, 1995). For example, a number of the leaders in my study utilized approaches grounded in Freire's liberation pedagogy. In various ways, they explained that they did not assume they had more knowledge or information than the youth with whom they worked. Instead, they relied partially on the experiences and knowledge of the youth with whom they worked to inform the development of their innovative initiatives. Methodologies can be taught in social entrepreneurial programs that encourage the input of traditionally marginalized populations. Along similar lines, I agree with the social entrepreneur in my study who advocated for referring to the target population as collaborators. He approached social entrepreneurship with the belief that the most socially oppressed actors must be actively involved in socially transformative initiatives. Conceptualizing the target population as collaborators potentially minimizes top-down approaches that might further exacerbate social discrepancies.

As mentioned, many of the leaders talked about how important it was to "really listen" to the target population. Formal social entrepreneurial programs could teach participants about a technique called active listening. Active listening is a method of listening which entails not just listening to the words, but also paying attention to the feelings or emotions attached to the words (Nugent & Halvorson, 1995). A key

component of active listening is a feedback step in which the listener restates (using different words) what the person had just stated, as well as asking clarifying questions. Such techniques heighten the chances that the listener understood what the speaker said and it makes the speaker feel as if he or she has been heard.

### **Engage in Communities of Innovation**

Aspiring social entrepreneurs would benefit from embedding themselves in a dense network of actors who have diverse areas of expertise and are equally committed to developing innovative solutions to social issues of mutual concern. Collaboration, according to Komives and Wagner (2009), signifies that the actors in a community decide on a vision for change together, and devise a means to collectively achieve that vision. In order to encourage a shared vision within a community of innovation, it is important that each actor have an opportunity to contribute and actively participate in the development of the mutually agreed upon goals. A shared vision that evolves out of collaborative processes fosters a sense of investment among the community players. Further, non-hierarchical interactions encourage a sense of belonging, so that each actor is more invested in the collective mission. My findings also indicate that working within a dense network of actors who engage in interdependent activities with a reflective component, over an extended period of time, can enhance a sense of solidarity which encourages collective action. Experiences that demonstrate that the actors involved can depend on one another

helps foster trust, which enhances the capacity to work well in future collaborative endeavors.

The findings of my study support prior literature that advocates for actors in communities of innovation to have diverse areas of expertise and perspectives (West, 2009). The social entrepreneurs in my study met actors from diverse social circles and from a myriad of experiences. To meet actors with diverse information and areas of expertise, who potentially could participate in a community of innovation, it could be beneficial for future social entrepreneurs to circulate among diverse social circles, engage in diverse activities, and pursue professional interests. Maintaining contact with acquaintances from diverse circles is equally important. One of the leaders in my study, for example, described how she not only enjoys meeting new people, but also enjoys maintaining contact with them. She explained, “I have 1,778 people and institutions listed in my Palm Pilot, many with birthdays and annotations of where I met them, what the encounter was like, and so on. I have always pursued friendships of the greatest diversity, being attracted, in fact, to those that are different....And it was a reliance on these networks... that I attribute to my ability to form [her organization]” (personal communication, June 10, 2009). Another leader told me that about once a month, he reaches out to casual contacts to ensure that he stays connected. Both leaders described how investing in these social contacts distinctly contributed to them achieving their social entrepreneurial ambitions.

Finally, practitioners and stakeholders in the field of social entrepreneurship should encourage the development of social entrepreneurs’ social capital, and not just be concerned with the development of the individual. Supporters of social entrepreneurship

should look to support dense networks of social innovators, as opposed to just providing individual-level support. Currently, philanthropist organizations such as Ashoka seek out individuals with an innovative social idea. Ashoka Fellows receive a two-year salary so that they can further develop and implement their ideas. Instead of funding an individual, my research suggests that Ashoka and similar organizations should research or evaluate the outcomes of potentially financing a group of social innovators to collectively develop their ideas.

### **Include Target Population in Communities of Innovation**

Considering how important the target population was in all of the other stages of social entrepreneurship according to the leaders, I recommend that social entrepreneurial leaders deliberately include the target population in the communities of innovation of social entrepreneurial initiatives and that they partake in the group learning process. Including representatives could minimize the possibility of detachment from the target population, which potentially feeds dynamics that enhance social exclusion. Future research on the involvement of the target population in the communities of innovation and the learning process that occurs within this network of actors could add insights into how inclusion of the target population maximizes empowerment.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Because of time limitations, I did not interview all of the actors in the communities of innovation. As such, I do not know how many actors in the communities of innovation considered themselves part of the target population. Based on the data from interviews with the social entrepreneurs, only about half of the leaders explicitly described actors in the communities of innovation, who could be labeled as part of the target population. The interviews also suggested that the target population was not always explicitly and intentionally involved in the group reflective process among the communities of innovation.



## **Theoretical Implications**

### **Models of Social Entrepreneurship**

This research study makes scholarly contributions to the academic literature emerging from the field of social entrepreneurship. As described in the literature review in chapter II, social entrepreneurship is understood as a process that entails a number of stages (Mair & Mair, 2005; Bornstein, 2007; Martin & Osberg, 2007). While models that describe the stages of social entrepreneurship vary, there is a general consensus that the process includes understanding a social problem to be addressed, conceptualizing an initiative to address the problem, implementing the initiative, and expanding it. While models of social entrepreneurship attempt to help practitioners and researchers make sense of the social entrepreneurial process, what emerged clearly from the data in my study was the fact that the stages did not typically happen in a linear fashion. Often, for example, leaders and the actors in the communities of innovation came up with an idea to overcome a social problem. Through the process of implementing their initiative, they either learned about new layers of a social problem or at times learned about entirely distinct social problems. Also common was the phenomena that innovative components of the initiatives evolved only after implementation of the initial idea. Both examples clearly go against the linear social entrepreneurial models that state that social entrepreneurs learn about a social problem, come up with an idea to overcome the problem, and lastly implement the idea. While models of social entrepreneurship certainly can help inform practitioners and researchers, flexibility in regards to the order

of the stages must be emphasized in order to more accurately represent what happens in practice. Such an approach to models also allows researchers to more openly consider the context in which the process of social entrepreneurship occurs. We need an iterative model of social entrepreneurial development that is less linear and stage-oriented and more cyclical in order to capture the processes of social entrepreneurship that circle back around to prior ones and can be built upon.

### **Directions for Future Research**

What future research directions would be constructive to the field of social entrepreneurship? As Mair (2010) suggests, "...Academics should not shy away from documenting and theorizing about 'the dark side' of social entrepreneurship" (p.26). Throughout the data collection and analysis stages of my study, I attended conferences and observed a graduate-level class on social entrepreneurship to stay abreast on current trends in the field. One of the potential dangers I observed about the concept of social entrepreneurship is the assumption that an innovative idea is enough to instigate positive social change. Such an assumption ignores social processes and power dynamics that feed into inequalities, which lead to a slew of social problems negatively impacting vulnerable populations. The field of social entrepreneurship may contribute to these social dynamics if critical reflection is not incorporated into social entrepreneurial processes. Without a concerted critical reflective process, it is all too possible that actors engaged in social entrepreneurship potentially will miss unintended consequences of their

efforts and work. Future research that examines the process of critically reflecting on social entrepreneurial implementation could prove to be fruitful in steering social entrepreneurship away from the potential downfalls mentioned above. Research could ask: with whom, when and how does the critical reflective process occur? In what ways does it inform subsequent social entrepreneurial endeavors? How does including the target population in this reflective process influence the process? Does it deter unintentional negative consequences of social entrepreneurship, such as exclusion of the population that social entrepreneurship intends to empower?

On a final note, the findings and recommendations in my study are not meant to take away from the important role that the leaders in my study played in the social entrepreneurial process. To be sure, the research participants are truly exceptional individuals, dedicated to addressing some of Brazil's most dire social problems. Their individual uniqueness, hard work, and contributions undoubtedly have had a marked impact on how the social entrepreneurial process evolved within their work, and thus have had a marked impact on thousands of lives in Rio de Janeiro and across the globe. Instead, the findings and implications of my study are meant to enhance our understanding of the social entrepreneurial process by casting a broader lens beyond innate characteristics such as hard work, passion, and charisma. By obtaining a more comprehensive understanding of the social entrepreneurial process, we can build upon the work and strengths of leaders, such as the ones in my study, in order to maximize their efforts toward a more just world.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix A - Structured Interview

#### 1. General questions about your organization

This section will ask general questions about your organization

##### 1. Name of organization

##### 2. In what year was your organization officially founded?

##### 3. Out of the following options, which category best describes your organization?

- ☐ Community association or neighborhood association
- ☐ Non-profit organization
- ☐ Network or social movement
- ☐ Research center
- ☐ Philanthropic organization

Other (please specify)

##### 4. Please choose the main objective of your organization from the following options:

- ☐ Empower a specific population (such as at-risk youth from a particular community)
- ☐ Violence prevention
- ☐ Human rights
- ☐ Improve a particular social structure or institution (such as the public education system, the judicial system, the labor market, etc.)
- ☐ Enhance the resources and self-sustainability of a particular community
- ☐ Transform the culture and way of thinking of society in general
- ☐ Develop and disseminate a particular 'program or package'
- ☐ Enhance, contribute to or initiate a social movement

Other (please specify)

##### 5. During the first year of your organization, how many people considered to be part of your targeted population directly benefited from your initiative?

##### 6. During your last fiscal year, how many people considered to be part of your targeted population directly benefited from your organization?

**7. How many people considered to be part of your targeted population have directly benefited from your organization since its inception?**

**2. Understanding the social problem**

This section will focus on resources you utilized to understand the social problem your organization is attempting to overcome. Resources may include but not limited to people, organizations, experiences, training, media or reading material.

**1. What is the primary social problem that your organization is attempting to address?**

- ☐ Physical violence
- ☐ Issues related to physical isolation of a marginalized population
- ☐ Social exclusion of a marginalized population
- ☐ Racism
- ☐ Discrimination based on class
- ☐ Poverty
- ☐ Discrimination (not class or race-based)
- ☐ Problems within societal institutions, such as school system, judicial system etc.
- ☐ Other (please specify)

**2. Please rank how important the following resources were in terms of learning about and understanding the social problem that your organization is trying to overcome.**

	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important
Interacting with your targeted population	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formal education (public school, private school, university training)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Additional training (Workshops, intensive training programs, continuing education etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Former work experience (professional experience)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtaining information from people within your closest social network (family, close friends, your most trusted colleagues)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtaining information from people within your more distant social network (classmates, acquaintances, more distant colleagues)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reading a book, journal, magazine or newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Television program, movie or documentary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>			

**3. Section II**

Targeted population of your organization

**1. Who is your targeted population? Please check all that apply.**

- ☐ Youth living in marginalized areas, such as favelas, the streets, lotementos, other informal areas or poor neighborhoods in the periphery of Rio
- ☐ All youth in Rio de Janeiro
- ☐ Any resident of Rio who is living below the poverty line
- ☐ Any person who is at-risk of facing physical violence
- ☐ Any person who is at-risk of joining the drug trade
- ☐ Any person who is at-risk of experiencing racism
- ☐ Any person who is at-risk of experiencing discrimination NOT based on class or race
- ☐ Any person at-risk of facing human rights violations

Other (please specify)

**2. Do you identify yourself as part of the targeted population? (Either currently or during any other time in your life).**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**3. With which group do you identify? (Please choose the first option if you answered "no" to the previous question).**

- ☐ I do not identify with the targeted population
- ☐ Youth living in marginalized areas such as favelas, the streets, lotementos, other informal areas or poor neighborhoods in the periphery of Rio
- ☐ All youth in Rio de Janeiro
- ☐ Any resident of Rio who is living below the poverty line
- ☐ Any person who is at-risk of facing physical violence
- ☐ Any person who is at-risk of joining the drug trade
- ☐ Any person who is at-risk of experiencing racism
- ☐ Any person who is at-risk of experiencing discrimination NOT based on class or race
- ☐ Any person at-risk of facing human rights violations

Other (please specify)

**4. Prior to the existence of your organization, did you have direct contact with your organization's targeted population? (Direct contact includes face to face talking, talking on the phone or mail correspondence).**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**5. In total, how many years (cumulatively) did you directly interact with the targeted population prior to beginning your organization? (Direct interaction includes face to face talking, talking on the phone or mail correspondence).**

- ☐ 0
- ☐ Less than 6 months
- ☐ 7 months - 11 months
- ☐ 1- 2 years
- ☐ 3- 4 years
- ☐ 5- 6 years
- ☐ 7- 8 years
- ☐ 9- 10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16 -20 years
- ☐ More than 20 years

**6. If yes, would you say that the targeted population with whom you had direct contact were:**

- ☐ A part of your closed social network (in other words, people within the targeted population had numerous connections with your family members, closest friends, or most trusted colleagues).
- ☐ Outside of your closed social network (in other words, people within the targeted population did not have numerous connections with your family members, closest friends and most trusted colleagues).



**7. Prior to the existence of your organization, how often did you have any type of personal contact with people within your targeted population during the time that you were learning about the social problem that your organization is meant to overcome? Personal contact can mean face to face contact, contact by phone, or mail.**

- ☐ Everyday
- ☐ At least once a week
- ☐ At least once a month
- ☐ At least once every 6 months
- ☐ At least once a year
- ☐ Never

**8. How often are you in direct personal contact with your targeted population now?**

- ☐ Everyday
- ☐ At least once a week
- ☐ At least once a month
- ☐ At least once every 6 months
- ☐ At least once a year
- ☐ Never

#### 4. Section III

Conceptualizing an innovative idea

**1. Who came up with the original idea of your organization?**

- ☐ You
- ☐ Another person who currently works for the organization
- ☐ Another person who does not currently work for the organization
- ☐ A collaborative effort including you and other people
- ☐ Other (please specify)

**2. Excluding yourself, how many people were involved in developing the initial ideas of the organization? Please only include people who you consider to be absolutely essential in the conceptualization of the initial ideas.**

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1-2
- ☐ 3-4
- ☐ 5-6
- ☐ 6-8
- ☐ 9-10
- ☐ More than 10

**3. In your own words, what do you think is unique and innovative about your organization?**



**4. Please rank how important the following sources were in terms of developing the innovative component of your organization.**

	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important
Interacting with your targeted population	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formal education (public school, private school, university training)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Additional training (Workshops, intensive training programs, continuing education etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Former work experience (professional experience)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtaining information from people within your closest social network (family, close friends, your most trusted colleagues)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtaining information from people within your more distant social network (classmates, acquaintances, more distant colleagues)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reading a book, journal, magazine or newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Television program, movie or documentary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Website/internet in general	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>			

## 5. Section IV

Implementing an innovative idea

**1. Can you list the first 5 funding sources you received for your organization?**

Source 1	<input type="text"/>
Source 2	<input type="text"/>
Source 3	<input type="text"/>
Source 4	<input type="text"/>
Source 5	<input type="text"/>

## 2. How did you find out about these funding sources?

	Word of mouth	Internet	Conference	Prior work experience	Advertisement	Other
Source 1.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Source 2.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Source 3.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Source 4.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Source 5.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 3. Please rank how important the following resources were in terms of helping you learn how to obtain funding for your organization.

	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important
Interacting with your targeted population	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formal education (public school, private school, university training)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Additional training (Workshops, intensive training programs, continuing education etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Former work experience (professional experience)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtaining information from people within your closest social network (family, close friends, your most trusted colleagues)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtaining information from people within your more distant social network (classmates, acquaintances, more distant colleagues)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reading a book, journal, magazine or newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Television program, movie or documentary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Website/internet in general	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>			

**4. Please rank in order of importance funding sources for your organization.**

	1 Very important	2 Important	3 Not very important	4 Not at all important
City –sponsored funding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Federal-sponsored funding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Funding from private companies or businesses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Individual personal donations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
International philanthropic funding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
National philanthropic funding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Resources from the community or targeted population	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Self-generating funding from the organization (i.e. fees, selling products, micro-financing etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
State-sponsored funding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

**5. Please mark whichever resources were MOST important in terms of helping you learn the skills and knowledge necessary to complete each of the following phases.**

	Personal past experience	Previous professional and work experience	Formal education (school, college, training etc.)	Additional resources, such as books, the internet etc.
Understanding the social problem your organization is attempting to address	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coming up with the original idea of your organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Beginning your organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtaining the necessary funds for the organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**6. In achieving the following tasks, who or what resources would you utilize for help?**

	Family	Friends	Other NGO leaders	Politicians	Targeted population	Mentor	Media sources (including TV, radio, movies)	Written sources (including books, magazines, journals)	The Internet
Fund raising for your organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtain a more profound understanding of the social problem your organization is attempting to overcome	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Publicity for your organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtaining physical space for your organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How to work effectively with diverse groups of people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gaining insight into the challenges your targeted population face	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**6. Section V**

Network questions

**1. Please mark any of the following universities which have collaborated with or contributed to the work of your organization.**

Organization	
Centro Universitário Augusto Motta/Unisuam	<input type="radio"/>
Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV)	<input type="radio"/>
Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (PUC,RJ)	<input type="radio"/>
UNI RIO-Universidade Rio de Janeiro	<input type="radio"/>
Universidade Cândido Mendes (UCAM)	<input type="radio"/>
Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro(UERJ)	<input type="radio"/>
Universidade Estácio de Sá	<input type="radio"/>
Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ)	<input type="radio"/>
Universidade Federal Fluminense	<input type="radio"/>
Universidade Veiga de Almeida (UVA)	<input type="radio"/>
University in Brasil but outside of Rio	<input type="radio"/>
University outside of Brasil	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	
<input type="text"/>	

**2. Please indicate if you have: Never heard of the following networks; Heard of the following networks but are not a member; Previously a member; A current member.**

	Never heard of this network	Heard of this network but am not a member	Previously a member	A current member
GIFE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ABONG	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
IBASE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)				
<input type="text"/>				

**3. If you are associated with any other professional networks that are not listed, please add them here.**

## 7. Resources

### 1. Do you have a home computer?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

### 2. How often do you use the Internet in relation to your work as a social entrepreneurial leader?

- ☐ Everyday  
☐ Once a week  
☐ Once a month  
☐ Less than once a month  
☐ I do not have access to the Internet

### 3. What are the most frequent Websites you visit in relation to your work as a social entrepreneurial leader?

### 4. Do you currently subscribe to any journals, magazines, or newspapers that are directly related to your work as a social entrepreneurial leader?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

### 5. If yes, which ones?

## 8. Section VII

Personal demographics

### 1. Your name (data is strictly confidential)

### 2. What is your official professional title?



**3. In which age group do you fit?**

- |                             |                             |                                |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 20-24 | <input type="radio"/> 40-44 | <input type="radio"/> 60-64    |
| <input type="radio"/> 25-29 | <input type="radio"/> 45-49 | <input type="radio"/> 65-69    |
| <input type="radio"/> 30-34 | <input type="radio"/> 50-54 | <input type="radio"/> Above 70 |
| <input type="radio"/> 35-39 | <input type="radio"/> 55-59 |                                |

**4. Gender**

- ☐ Male ☐ Female

**5. How would describe your race based on the following categories?**

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black
- ☐ Brown (Mixed race)
- ☐ Yellow
- ☐ Indigenous
- ☐ Other (please specify)

**6. In what neighborhood is your current home address?****7. How long have you lived at that address?**

- ☐ Less than 6 months
- ☐ 6 months to 11 months
- ☐ 1 to 2 years
- ☐ 3 to 4 years
- ☐ 5 to 6 years
- ☐ 7 to 10 years
- ☐ more than 10 years

**8. Do you live in a neighborhood or community in which your organization serves its targeted population?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**9. Please list up to three neighborhoods where you lived before the age of 18? (If you are not from Rio, please list the city and country in which you lived).**

**10. Please choose the highest level of education you have COMPLETED**

- ☐ No education   
 ☐ Primary education   
 ☐ Secondary education   
 ☐ Postsecondary   
 ☐ Postgraduate   
 ☐ Other

**11. Please indicate if you went to a public or private school for any of the following levels of education that you attended. If you did not attend this level of education, then please choose "Did not attend."**

	Private	Public	Did not attend
Primary education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Secondary education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Postsecondary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Postgraduate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**12. Do you have a job in which you get paid?**

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

**13. What was your MONTHLY household income in 2008 (this includes all household salaries, pensions, income from rentals, or other forms of income).**

- ☐ R\$0 - R\$450  
☐ R\$451- R\$2,255  
☐ R\$2256 - R\$4,500  
☐ R\$4501 - R\$9,000  
☐ R\$9001 - R\$13,500  
☐ R\$13, 501 - R\$18,000  
☐ More than R\$18,000

**14. Would you describe yourself currently as:**

- ☐ Upper class (elite)
- ☐ Middle to upper class
- ☐ Middle class
- ☐ Working class
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Other (please specify)

**15. Would you describe your family when you were growing up as:**

- ☐ Upper class (elite)
- ☐ Middle to upper class
- ☐ Middle class
- ☐ Working class
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Other (please specify)

**16. Have you ever won any type of awards or honors in relation to your work?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, which ones?

**17. How many leadership training programs have you participated in?**

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1-3
- ☐ 4-6
- ☐ 7-9
- ☐ 10-12
- ☐ more than 12

**18. Who sponsored the leadership programs in which you participated?**

**19. How many previous leadership positions have you held? A leadership position means any position in which you were considered the person in charge.**

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 or more

**20. How many years have you worked in the nonprofit sector (including your time at your current organization)?**

- ☐ less than 5 years
- ☐ 5 to 10 years
- ☐ 11 to 15 years
- ☐ 16 to 25 years
- ☐ Over 25 years

**21. Please select any of the following sectors in which you have previously or currently work:**

- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Didn't work
- ☐ Public sector
- ☐ Nonprofit organization
- ☐ Postsecondary
- ☐ For-profit business/corporate sector
- ☐ Other

**22. Have you ever done any voluntary work prior to your work with your current organization?**

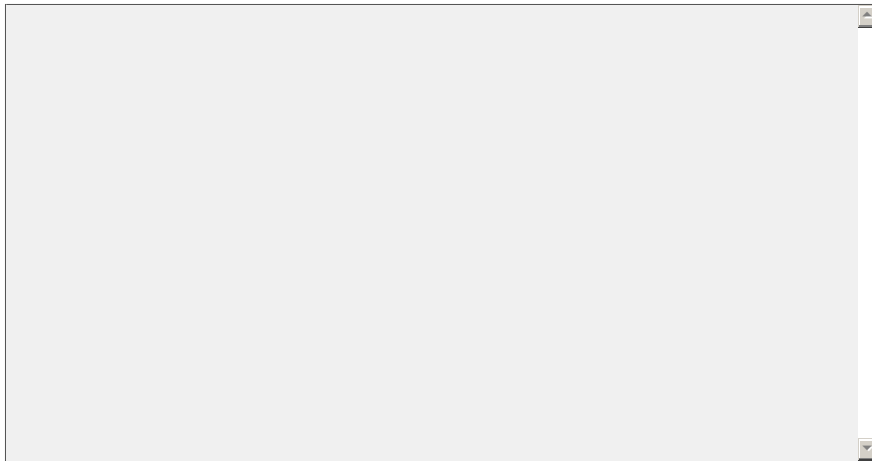
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**23. Please mark any of the following political activist or social movement activities in which you have been involved.**

- ☐ Political march or protest
- ☐ Door to door canvassing
- ☐ Belong to a social activist group
- ☐ Other (please specify)

**9. Additional comments**

**1. Is there anything else you would like to share in regards to how you learned the necessary skills and knowledge to take on the role of a social entrepreneur?**



## **Appendix B - Semi-Structured Life History Interview**

1. What was happening in your life when you came up with the idea for your initiative? Describe events that led up to its development.
2. You had stated in the semi-structured interview that X number of people were absolutely critical in the conceptualization of the initial idea. Can you describe each individual, specifically, how did you meet? How would you have described your relationship with them at that time (close, acquaintance?) In what ways did they contribute to the development of the idea?
3. Who helped you initially implement the idea? How would you have described your relationship with them at that time (close, acquaintance?) In what ways did they contribute to the implementation?
4. In the structured interview, you said that your initiative aims to do X. How did you learn about the social problems that your initiative is attempting to overcome?
5. How does your initiative try to address or overcome these problems?
6. How did you initially obtain access to the target population?
7. What are the biggest problems that your target population face?
8. Referring back to the structured interview question, “What do you think is innovative about your initiative,” what do you think were the key experiences, resources, and people that helped you develop these innovative components?
9. How did you come up with [specific program or idea within initiative, based on Web site and other written materials] ? Can you describe in more detail? Who contributed to its evolution? How?
10. You mentioned during the semi-structured interview that your first five funding sources were: X, X, X, X & X. Can you tell me how you initially found out about these funding sources? If through a specific person, how did you meet that person and how would you describe your relationship with them when they introduced you to the funding opportunity? (Close, Acquaintance?)
11. How did you obtain the initial space for the initiative?
12. How did you learn to obtain official non-governmental status for your organization? What experiences or resources did you rely on to learn about this? If someone helped

you, who? How did you meet them and how would you have described your relationship with them when you were working on non-governmental status of your initiative?

13. What steps did you do to get media coverage? Who did you talk to? How did you get access?

14. In your opinion what are the key skills and knowledge necessary to take on the role of a social entrepreneur?

15. In your opinion, what experiences, people, books, and trainings do you think have had the most important impact in helping you develop the necessary skills and knowledge to take on this role?

16. Which people have had the greatest influence on you in general and in relation to being a social entrepreneur?

17. You have had significant success in developing X initiative. What do you think contributed to this success? What do you think is different about your trajectory that allowed you to realize this leadership role? What additional resources, experiences, or other people (that we have not discussed) do you think have played a role in your success?

18. You stated that you participated in X number of leadership programs sponsored by X. Can you describe how you found out about the programs and what you learned (if anything) from them that has informed your work as a social entrepreneur?

19. Can you think of other leaders that you think meet the parameters of my study and that you would recommend I reach out to?

## Appendix C - Databases Used to Create a List of Social Entrepreneurs

**Table I - Databases Used to Create a List of Social Entrepreneurs**

Database Source	Description
ABONG	<p><i>Associação Brasileira de Organizações Não Governamentais</i> (ABONG) (Brazilian Association of NGOs). The purpose of ABONG is to assist in the exchange of information of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focused on promoting citizenship, human rights, social justice, and participatory democracy. ABONG has a database of Brazilian NGOs that promote the aforementioned issues. ABONG also strives to support their efforts by encouraging exchanges among national and international NGOs. ABONG began in 1991 with 108 organizations. ABONG has over 200 organizations listed in their database.</p> <p><a href="http://www.abong.org.br/">http://www.abong.org.br/</a></p>
Ashoka fellows	<p>Founded in 1980 by Bill Drayton in Washington, DC, Ashoka funds social entrepreneurial fellows who have innovative solutions to social problems and the potential to change patterns across society. Ashoka strives to shape a global, entrepreneurial, competitive citizen sector. Ashoka Fellows work in over 60 countries. Brazil is the country with the largest number of fellows.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ashoka.org/">http://www.ashoka.org/</a></p>
Ajuda Brasil	<p><i>AjudaBrasil</i> (HelpBrazil) is a national database of existing social projects in the non-profit sector. HelpBrazil uses the internet to bring together organizations that are looking for support and people who wish to contribute to social action. The database makes it possible for potential donors and volunteers to choose the organizations to which they would like to give.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ajudabrasil.org.br/">www.ajudabrasil.org.br/</a></p>
Rits	<p><i>Rede de Informações para o Terceiro Setor</i> (Rits) (Information Network for the Third Sector ). Rits was founded in 1997 with the mission to be a virtual network of information, focused on the strengthening of civil society organizations and social movements. The project aims to foster and support the sharing of information, knowledge and resources among organizations and social movements and to promote interaction of initiatives and projects through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), particularly the Internet.</p> <p><a href="http://www.rits.org.br/">http://www.rits.org.br/</a></p>



Database Source	Description
AVINA	<p>AVINA is a foundation dedicated to supporting sustainable development in Latin America. They have developed a robust network made up of thousands of international organizations, foundations, social leaders, and leaders within the business sector, who are dedicated to sustainable development in Latin America. According to their Web site, “We identify opportunities for systemic change in Latin America, linking and strengthening the individuals and institutions in the region that can drive that change toward a more sustainable future. When we identify an opportunity with our partners, we broker alliances around shared agendas of action that can contribute to a regionally relevant scale of impact. AVINA invests directly in these shared agendas on the ground, and we look for synergies and collaboration potential with the work of other international organizations.”</p> <p><a href="http://www.informeavina2010.org/english/que-hacemos.shtml">http://www.informeavina2010.org/english/que-hacemos.shtml</a></p>
Devdir	<p>The Directory of development organizations is a database intended to provide a comprehensive reference for development practitioners, researchers, donor employees, and policymakers who are committed to good governance, sustainable development and poverty reduction. The Directory started as a small venture in 1997 and converted to an online directly in 2000. The directory is a not-for-profit initiative that depends to a large extent on contributions from organizations visiting the site. In addition, the directory gathers its information from publicly available sources on the Internet, including the organizations' Web sites and many other resources based on the initiator's experience and perspective as a development economist. Currently it has over 53,750 development organizations.</p> <p><a href="http://www.devdir.org/">http://www.devdir.org/</a></p>
Brazil Foundation	<p>Brazil Foundation is a philanthropic non-profit organization that focuses on generating and investing resources in civil society programs that promote sustainable local development and transform social conditions in Brazil. The organization launched its first Annual Selection of Projects in Brazil in 2002. That first year, it gave money to four projects. The Brazil Foundation has also organized conferences in the United States featuring social leaders from Brazil, connecting them directly with potential donors in the U.S., in order to create greater understanding of the social landscape and the non-profit sector in Brazil.</p> <p><a href="http://www.brazilfoundation.org/english/index.php">http://www.brazilfoundation.org/english/index.php</a></p>
FASE	<p>FASE is a non-profit organization that supports locally-based projects and initiatives, which align with FASE’s overarching mission to build a democratic society that embraces social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and universal social, economic, cultural environment, civil and political rights.</p> <p><a href="http://www.fase.org.br/v2/">http://www.fase.org.br/v2/</a></p>

## Appendix D - Categories of Non-Profit Organizations Used by Databases

**Table II - Categories of Non-Profit Organizations Used by Databases**

<b>Database source</b>	<b>Categories of organizations within the database</b>
<b>Devdir</b>	<b>International organizations (i.e. UN organizations, World Bank, IMF, etc.)</b>
	<b>Government institutions (i.e. ministries, government institutions, planning agencies)</b>
	<b>Private sector support organizations (i.e. chambers of commerce and industry, fair-trade organizations etc)</b>
	<b>Finance institutions (i.e. central banks, national development banks, commercial banks, credit unions, microfinance)</b>
	<b>Training and research centers (i.e. universities, research centers and institutions, training institutes)</b>
	<b>Civil society organizations (i.e. development foundations and associations, membership development organizations, microfinance institutions, faith-based development organizations, development programmes and projects; development consulting firms (including references to job opp.)</b>
	<b>Information providers (development newsletters/journals)</b>
	<b>Grantmakers (i.e. fundraising, charity and philanthropic organizations).</b>
<b>ABONG (Area of work)</b>	<b>Agriculture</b>
	<b>Arts and Culture</b>
	<b>Social Assistance</b>
	<b>Commerce</b>
	<b>Communication</b>
	<b>Consumerism</b>
	<b>Regional economic development</b>
	<b>Racial discrimination</b>
	<b>STDs/AIDS</b>

Database source	Categories of organizations within the database
	Education
	Social Movements and NGOs
	Justice and "promotion of rights"
	Environmental
	"Popular organization/popular participation"
	Agricultural issues
	Urban issues
	Gender and sexual discrimination
	Health
	Public security
	Work/Employment
Brazil Foundation	Education
	Health
	Human Rights
	Civic Participation
	Culture
Ajuda Brasil	Art and Culture
Ajuda Brasil	Social assistance
	Combat hunger
	Communication
	Kids and youth
	Human Rights
	Drugs
	Education

Database source	Categories of organizations within the database
	<b>Sports and Leisure</b>
	<b>Foundations</b>
	<b>Gender</b>
	<b>Work and employment</b>
	<b>Globalization and international relations</b>
	<b>Racial identity and ethnicity</b>
	<b>Environment</b>
	<b>Research</b>
	<b>Public Politics</b>
	<b>Special needs</b>
	<b>Rural movements</b>
	<b>Urban issues</b>
	<b>Religion</b>
	<b>Health</b>
	<b>Violence</b>
	<b>Volunteer</b>
	<b>Others</b>
<b>Ashoka (Fields of work)</b>	<b>Economic Development</b>
	<b>Environment</b>
	<b>Health</b>
	<b>Human Rights</b>
	<b>Learning/education</b>
	<b>Civic engagement</b>

## Appendix E – Organization Objectives, Target Population and Leader

### Demographics

**Table III - Main Objectives of the Social Entrepreneurial Organizations**

Org. No.	Empower a specific population	Violence prevention	Human rights and citizenship	Improve a particular social structure or institution	Enhance the resources and self-sustainability of a particular community	Transform the culture and way of thinking of society in general	Develop and disseminate a particular 'program or package	Enhance, contribute to or initiate a social movement	Other
1					×				
2	+		+						
3		+				+			
4	+			+					
5	■	■							
6	■					■			Social action using cultural mediums
7		■							Prevention of physical/ sexual abuse ("primary and secondary" levels of risk of violence)
8	■		■	■					All of the options except, enhance the resources and self-sustainability of a particular community, develop and disseminate a particular "package or program," and enhance, contribute to or initiate a social movement
9			×						
10	■								At risk youth on street
11	■					■			Teach whichever person wants to learn to act w/ priority given to residents from X community
12						+		+	
13			×						
14		×							
15			×						
16	■			■		■			A hard question to answer because everything is intermixed

Org. No.	Empower a specific population	Violence prevention	Human rights and citizenship	Improve a particular social structure or institution	Enhance the resources and self-sustainability of a particular community	Transform the culture and way of thinking of society in general	Develop and disseminate a particular program or package	Enhance, contribute to or initiate a social movement	Other
17		■							Refer to Web site
18	■					■			Refer to Web site
19			⊙						Human rights: Transform youth through arts
20			■	■					Earlier work was focused on human rights and citizenship; Later work on improving a social institution
21		■	■	■					Against many forms of violence: Contribute to healthy family and community relationships
22			+	+					
23	■								Economic development
24			×						
25	×								
26	⊙								Income generation and professional empowerment
27	■								Augment the cultural universe and contribute to the critical thinking skills of youth from low-income areas through audiovisual mediums

Table Key	
■	Response Interpreted from 'other' (where an appropriate match was obvious)
⊙	Participant filled in options <i>and</i> 'other'
+	Participant did not fill out answer; Interpreted based on Internet data on organization's website
×	Participant response

Table IV - Target Population of Social Entrepreneurial Organizations

Org. No.	Total number of target population directly affected by initiative	Youth living in marginalized spaces	All youth in Rio de Janeiro Living in poverty	At-risk of physical violence	At-risk of joining the drug trade	At-risk of facing racism	At-risk of discrimination not based on race or class	At-risk of facing human rights violations	Other
1	1,500		✕						
2	3,500	+	+	+	+	+		+	
3	Over 40,000	+	+	+					
4	3,100	■							Youth living in marginalized spaces
5	Over 100,000								Socially excluded populations in Rio (i.e. Garbage workers, street kids, <i>favelas</i> residents, citizens with tuberculosis etc.)
6	50,000	✕							
7	150,000			■					Youth facing violence, Focus on prevention of family violence
8	18,000	✕			✕	✕	✕	✕	
9	7,000								Prisoners
10	10,000	+							
11	4,500	■	■						Whoever wants to learn theater with priority given to residents from X community. Began with only residents from X community, but realized needed fusion of people
12	Over 100,000	+							
13	Over 30,000	+		+		+	+	+	
14	3,000	✕							
15	Over 50,000	■						■	10 <i>favelas</i> in the southern zone of Rio (Any person who lives in these neighborhoods)
16	Over 100,000	✕		✕				✕	
17	Over 100,000								Any child who has been sexually violated
18	15,000	✕	✕	✕	✕			✕	
19	3,330	✕							Children and adolescents, moms of youth with whom they work (from marginalized spaces)
20	Over 100,000	✕							Children and adolescents that are at-risk of being in a marginalized situation
21	5,000		✕				✕		

Org. No.	Total number of target population directly affected by initiative	Youth living in marginalized spaces	All youth in Rio de Janeiro Living in poverty	At-risk of physical violence	At-risk of joining the drug trade	At-risk of facing racism	At-risk of discrimination not based on race or class	At-risk of facing human rights violations	Other
22	40,000								Anyone who has limited access to media and communications ( <i>Favela</i> residents, patients in mental hospitals etc.
23	12,000								Former prisoners and their families
24	7,000	✕							
25	Over 50,000	✕							
26	700		■						Anyone who has marketable skills, but cannot get out of poverty
27	Over 5,000	■							Public school children/ Youth living in peripheral spaces

Table Key	
■	Response Interpreted from 'other' (where an appropriate match was obvious)
⊙	Participant filled in options <i>and</i> 'other'
+	Participant did not fill out answer; Interpreted based on Internet data on organization's website
✕	Participant response



**Table V - Demographics of Social Entrepreneurs**

<b>Org. No.</b>	<b>Self-identified as part of target population</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Monthly Household Income</b>	<b>Current SES</b>	<b>Family SES While Growing Up</b>	<b>Educational attainment</b>
1	No	Female	White	R\$4501-R\$9000	Middle to upper class	Middle to upper class	Graduate school/advanced degree
2	No	Male	White	More than R\$18,000	NA	Middle class	Graduate school/advanced degree
3	No	Male	White	R\$13,501-R\$18,000	Middle to upper class	Middle to upper class	Graduate school/advanced degree
4	No	Female	White	R\$9001-R\$13,500	Upper class (elite)	Middle class	Graduate school/advanced degree
5	No	Male	White	R\$ 4501-R\$9000	NA	Upper class	Graduate school/advanced degree
6	Yes	Male	Mixed	R\$ 4501-R\$9000	Middle to upper class	Lower class	High School
7	No	Male	White	NA	Middle class	Middle class	Graduate school/advanced degree
8	Yes	Female	White	R\$13,501-R\$18,000	Middle class	Lower class	Graduate school/advanced degree
9	Yes	Male	Black	R\$0 -R\$450	Middle class	Middle class	High School
10	No	Male	Mixed	R\$2,256-R\$4,500	Middle class	Lower class	College
11	Yes	Male	Mixed	NA	Working class	Lower class	College
12	Yes	Male	Black	NA	Middle class	Lower class	Other
13	Yes	Male	White	R\$9001-R\$13,500	Middle to upper class	Working class	Graduate school/advanced degree
14	No	Male	Mixed	R\$451-R2,255	Middle class	Middle class	Primary
15	No	Female	White	R\$2,256-R\$4,500	Middle class	Middle class	Graduate school/advanced degree
16	Yes	Male	Mixed	R\$13,501-R\$18,000	Middle to upper class	Lower class	Graduate school/advanced degree
17	No	Female	White	R\$ 4501-R\$9000	Middle to upper class	Middle to upper class	Graduate school/advanced degree
18	Yes	Male	Mixed	R\$2,256-R\$4,500	Middle to upper class	Lower class	High School
19	Yes	Female	White	R\$451-R2,255	Middle class	Middle class	Graduate school/advanced degree
20	Yes	Female	White	More than R\$18,000	Middle to upper class	Lower class	Graduate school/advanced degree
21	Yes	Male	White	R\$ 4501-R\$9000	Middle class	Middle class	Graduate school/advanced degree
22	Yes	Male	White	R\$ 4501-R\$9000	NA	NA	Graduate school/advanced degree
23	Yes	Male	Black	R\$451-R2,255	Middle to	Middle class	High School

<b>Org. No.</b>	<b>Self- identified as part of target population</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Monthly Household Income</b>	<b>Current SES</b>	<b>Family SES While Growing Up</b>	<b>Educational attainment</b>
					upper class		
24	Yes	Male	Black	R\$4501-R\$9000	Middle class	Lower class	College
25	Yes	Male	Black	R\$2,256-R\$4,500	Middle class	Lower class	College
26	No	Female	White	R\$2,256-R\$4,500	Middle class	Middle to upper class	College
27	Yes	Male	Black	R\$2,256-R\$4,500	Middle class	Working class	College

## **Appendix F - A Description of Four Social Entrepreneurial Initiatives**

As discussed in chapter III, a total of 38 social entrepreneurs matched the criteria for my study, with the possibility of an additional eight leaders also meeting the criteria. The primary criteria for the study was that the leaders conceptualized and instigated an initiative in the third sector geared toward violence prevention and the empowerment of youth living in Rio's *favelas* or other marginalized spaces. The initiatives not only addressed the immediate problems affecting a specific population, but also attempted to instigate social transformation beyond the target population. In other words, the initiative specifically attempted to change or "transform" the larger social context in which the problem was embedded. The initiative was innovative (within the context of Rio de Janeiro) with the potential of impacting a larger population or the structures in which the initiative was embedded. The initiative had the potential for scaling up and was still functioning, the person or group of people who started the initiative were still with the organization. To give a more tangible description of what these initiatives looked like in practice, I will describe four of the initiatives. In Chapter II, I mentioned that according to Alvord et al., (2004) social entrepreneurial initiatives take on different forms. Some develop a "package" or program that utilize the resources of numerous sources to address a prevalent social problem while others focus on local capacity-building to solve problems. Others use innovative approaches to build grassroots alliances that lead to changes in structures and institutions that traditionally have reproduced power dynamics. While I think Alvord et al.'s (2004) categorization description offers a nice jumping point to understand the many shapes and faces of social entrepreneurial initiatives, in many

cases, the initiatives in my study combined one or more or all of these social entrepreneurial forms, suggesting that the categorization system should be used with flexibility. I chose three initiatives that illuminated the distinctions among the forms of social entrepreneurial enterprises outlined by Alvord et al. (2004), along with an example that combines the different forms. These descriptions give a sense of what the social entrepreneurial initiatives in my study look like in practice and why we would want to foster future social entrepreneurs who work toward positive transformative social change.

### **Package**

Sofia grabbed her keys and raced to her car, the phone call replaying in her mind. It was the desperation in the young voice that haunted her. He begged, “*Tia, Tia* come fast. There are a bunch of police shooting here.” Within minutes she pulled up to the church but it was too late. The police officers had already shot eight street children who had been sleeping in front of *Candelária* church. When the remaining survivors saw her, they huddled around her terrified that the police would come back. It was that day that changed Sofia’s life forever. She had been working with street children for years, but after the infamous *Candelária* massacre, she felt an intense responsibility, a calling, to fight for the human rights of these young ones that society had regarded as disposable.

After the *Candelária massacre*, Sofia began working with a group of street children who were living under a downtown viaduct. She went five days a week to teach classes on the street for any child who was interested in learning. Some days she had over 200 students in her “school without walls”. Sofia applied the teaching methodologies that she had developed after years of working with children in Europe, Africa and Brazil who

had been traumatized by violence. Taking systematic notes on how these kids take in information, she noticed that their learning processes were different from children growing up in non-violent environments. Sofia created, adapted, tested, validated and used a teaching methodology geared toward kids living in conflict areas.

Around 1998 the city government forced all of the squatters living under the viaduct to relocate to one of the most violent *favelas* in Rio. Sofia's "school" went with them and she eventually got the necessary financial support to purchase three houses that served as a home base for her educational initiative. The *favela* in which the school was located was occupied by three rivaling drug factions, which meant violence was an everyday occurrence. Most of the students in her school had witnessed at least one family member who had been violently murdered by the police or drug trade. Some had lost up to three generations of family members. Most of the students, who started at the school had developmental delays typical of children suffering from post-traumatic experiences such as social problems and an inability to complete simple logic and memorization exercises.

Sofia's school customizes to the individual needs of each student. The purpose of the school is three-fold. The first is to get graduation rates up so that the students will ultimately fair better in the job market. The second is to teach children that the oppressive conditions in which they live are temporary and that they have the capacity to change their future. The third is to teach the children about their basic human rights and responsibilities as Brazilian citizens.

Sofia's program has proven to be effective in raising the academic performance of the participants compared to other students, who face similar violent situations. The older students in the program have gotten jobs and some have enrolled at elite schools with scholarships. Sofia's school serves over 430 children a month, which includes a free meal five days a week. Her program costs R\$500 a month (roughly \$300).

Impressed with the results of her program, the city Ministry of Education has sponsored a training program for teachers from 150 public schools to incorporate Sofia's educational methodologies. The aim of these methods is to lower the stress level of students, enhance their motivation to learn and overcome the developmental delays caused by violent trauma. Educational officials predict that her methodology has the potential to impact hundreds of thousands of Rio's public school children, who suffer from violent-related trauma.

### **Local Capacity Building**

Lolo launched initiative X in 2000 after noticing that many communities in peripheral urban areas used innovative approaches at the local level to address immediate problems, but due to geographical barriers, they couldn't share their innovations or learn from other communities' solutions. Lolo realized that because she was in a better financial position, which allowed her to travel easily among communities across Rio de Janeiro (as well as travel to cities around the world), she knew more about the myriad of innovative projects that existed within communities than the community leaders who helped orchestrate them. This realization was one of the primary motivating factors for instigating Initiative X. Around the turn of the millennium the Internet was just beginning

to be used on a widespread scope among citizens in Brazil. Lolo saw the infinite possibilities of using this new technology to disseminate information about innovative projects among community leaders since the Internet would overcome the geographic boundaries that limited them from obtaining such information. At that time, no such database existed on community projects across Rio aimed at countering some of the direst problems that communities faced. The mission of Initiative X is “to integrate low-income communities into the wider society using online and offline networking forums and communication tools. Though the organization is inspired by local realities in Rio de Janeiro, the on-the-ground work is focused on incubating sustainable models that strengthen community organizers and that can be replicated in support of community organizations across the globe.”

Since its initiation in 2000, the organization has achieved the following accomplishments: created a technology hub for local civic leaders in Rio in which more than 1,000 community leaders from 215 Rio neighborhoods, 23 Brazilian states, and 22 nations have benefited from a range of services, such as writing project proposals and developing and engaging in community workshops; offered Internet-based resources for the documentation, dissemination and development of their respective community projects; and amplified the exchange of knowledge and information about the initiatives of other NGOs that support community initiatives. The organization also implemented Brazil’s first Social Media Training for community leaders, training 180 leaders from 50 neighborhoods to produce stories and videos, published them online, and developed networks to disseminate this information. By learning about projects and efforts that leaders from other communities are developing and engaging in to overcome their most

pressing problems, such information can enhance the capacity of community leaders whose neighborhoods face similar problems.

### **Grassroots**

From a young age, Jo had it in his head that he was a prince. This is an unusual notion for a child, but even more so for one who spent much of his childhood living on the streets. Jo was born in the outskirts of Rio (in Baixada Fluminense). His mom was a hard-working *doméstica*, working up to 12 hours a day for an affluent family in the southern part of Rio. His father was an abusive alcoholic who used all of the money his mom made to consume *cachaça*. When his mom could no longer take the abuse, she fled to the streets with her son and daughter. From the ages of eight to 12, Jo lived on the streets, and he remembered spending much of his childhood hungry. Despite the adverse conditions in which he lived, he knew that one day he would own a house and be someone important. After all, he was a prince. At 12 years old he and his family moved to *Mangueira*, a community in the north zone, famous for its samba school and violent history due to rivaling drug factions. When Jo was about 18 years old, he was introduced to the world of hip hop and he said it changed his life forever. The politically and socially –charged messages in some of the songs “woke up a social consciousness” in him and inspired him to think about how to address social issues. Through the hip-hop world, Jo met other similar- minded artists. He began having conversations with two close friends he had met through the music industry, who also lived in the *favelas* and had a desire to do *something* about the myriad of social problems they faced on a daily basis. They got together once a week to talk about a specific topic, ranging from racism to the drug trade to police brutality. Over time, participants in the group invited friends who they felt could



contribute something meaningful to the debates. First there were five people, then 10, and the gatherings ultimately grew to include hundreds of people. A critical component of the movement was that the “solutions” that evolved out of the discussions came from residents of the *favela* as opposed to outsiders.

The movement grew to be so big that they eventually needed to become a formal institution in order to accept donations and handle other logistical issues. The result was the creation of an organized *favela* movement in which the residents were involved in the planning and implementation of approaches necessary to transform the *favelas*. For example, the organization developed a film school for youth living in peripheral areas. Taught by voluntary top filmmakers, the focus of the school is not only to teach the technical skills necessary to create audiovisual arts (which potentially can open up professional pathways for youth in media arts), but also to encourage youth to use film as a medium to critically reflect on societal issues. In an effort to provide the students an opportunity to share their work and to bring awareness of what life is really like in peripheral areas as opposed to perpetuating stereotypes typical in mainstream media, the organization orchestrates an annual film festival in Rio de Janeiro dedicated to films produced and directed by citizens from peripheral areas. The film festival, which takes place all over Rio de Janeiro, provides a space to intentionally include this traditionally excluded population in the process of cultural production in Brazil. The organization engages in other activities to ensure the inclusion of traditionally marginalized youth in Brazilian. For example, the leaders of the organization occupy two seats on the National Secretary of Youth, assisting in the design and implementation of government programs for young people with a focus on *favelas*. They serve as “the voice” of the youth they

work closely with on a daily basis to ensure that their needs are heard by government officials and policy makers.

Today the organization has over 35 nuclei in Brazil and spans 12 countries with a total of over 100,000 participants worldwide. One of the primary principles of the organization is that projects and initiatives are locally-based (versus projects developed by “outside experts”). Therefore, instigators of initiatives can proceed and develop projects any way they feel would be most beneficial to their community and the only requirements necessary to utilize the name of the organization is that they follow a handful of principles, which are spelled out in the guidelines given to those interested in instigating a nuclei. The guidelines are based on the initiators’ experiences and describe the philosophical and methodological approaches they embrace. In an effort to connect the distinct nuclei and encourage a sense of unity, the nuclei have video conference calls with the leaders in order to discuss projects they are working on. Also the umbrella organization orchestrates events such as “Annual sports weekend” in which all of the nuclei in Brazil partake in 36 hours of sports during the same weekend. Again such events are meant to encourage a sense of solidarity and to motivate participants to think about ways of overcoming oppressive social processes that residents of *favelas* face.

### **A Combination of Social Entrepreneurial Forms**

The whole idea behind Initiative X is to provide the resources necessary for people from the ground up to experiment with innovative ideas to address Brazil’s most dire social problems. The idea of the program began when Franz, its Dutch founder, was invited to Brazil by a Dutch organization that was donating one million dollars per year

to the National Movement of Street Children. They wanted Franz to assess where their money was going and if it was being put to good use. In Franz's report, he said that a lot of the street educators working in the Movement were very kind people and working hard, but they did not have much training, and he suggested that they set up a training program. The foundation invited Franz to set up a pilot training program in Brazil the following year. Through this work Franz discovered that a lot of the educators had innovative educational ideas, but they were not allowed to implement them because the organizations paying their salaries did not approve of the ideas. Franz decided in 1988 to start an initiative that would offer the space and resources to test out innovative projects instigated from the ground up. One of the primary problems the educators observed among the street children population was the rapid spread of sexually transmitted diseases. One of the first experimental projects of the initiative was educating street children about safe sex practices using a multiplicative educational approach and implementing an effective condom distribution program. While such an initiative may not sound innovative, many of the projects at the time that worked with street children were sponsored by the Catholic Church, and the use of condoms was not permitted. In fact, simply talking about the reality that street children were having sex was looked down upon. The safe sex and condom initiative reduced the rates of sexually transmitted diseases among the street population.

In most cases, the street children with whom the street educators worked typically had family members living in *favelas*. During interventions attempting to reunite youth with their families, the educators and the leader of Initiative X met residents from the *favelas*. Such interactions opened up to them a network of people living in *favelas*, which

opened up the door to work on initiatives within the *favelas*. Another of the innovative projects of Initiative X was training community members of *favelas* that had virtually no access to health care facilities to run health clinics. They developed a system of training community health agents in order to establish connections between the people lacking access to health care and the health care system. The project was such a success that in the 1990s the Brazilian government incorporated it as a model to be replicated all over Brazil. The project has made health care services accessible to thousands of Brazilians living in marginalized areas.

Since its first years the initiative has spawned literally dozens of innovative programs aimed at addressing social issues that affect Rio's most marginalized population, too many to describe in the limited space of this appendix. Initiative X combines the different forms of social entrepreneurial initiatives described by Alvord et al. (2004). Their programs include but are not limited to: violence prevention, human rights advocacy, access to health services and emancipatory education programs.